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WILLIAM E. CHANNING, D. D.

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DISCOURSES.

PREACHING CHRIST.

DISCOURSE

AT THE

ORDINATION OF THE REV. JOHN EMERY ABBOT.

SALEM, 1815.

COLOSSIANS i. 28: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

IN the verses immediately preceding the text, we find the Apostle enlarging with his usual zeal and earnestness on a subject peculiarly dear to him; on the glorious *mystery* of God, or in other words, on the great purpose of God, which had been kept *secret* from ages, to make the Gentile world partakers, through faith, of the blessings of the long-promised Messiah. "Christ, the hope of glory to the Gentiles," was the theme on which Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, delighted to expatiate. Having spoken of Jesus in this character, he immediately adds, "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

On the present occasion, which invites us to consider the design and duties of the Christian ministry,

I have thought that these words would guide us to many appropriate and useful reflections. They teach us what the Apostle preached; "We preach Christ." They teach us the end or object for which he thus preached; "That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Following this natural order, I shall first consider what is intended by "preaching Christ." I shall then endeavour to illustrate and recommend the end or object for which Christ is to be preached; and I shall conclude with some remarks on the methods by which this end is to be accomplished. In discussing these topics, on which a variety of sentiment is known to exist, I shall necessarily dissent from some of the views which are cherished by particular classes of Christians. But the frank expression of opinion ought not to be construed into any want of affection or esteem for those from whom I differ.

I. What are we to understand by "preaching Christ"? This subject is the more interesting and important, because, I fear, it has often been misunderstood. Many persons imagine, that Christ is never preached, unless his name is continually repeated and his character continually kept in view. This is an error, and should be exposed. Preaching Christ, then, does not consist in making Christ perpetually the subject of discourse, but in inculcating, on his authority, *the religion which he taught*. Jesus came to be the light and teacher of the world; and in this sublime and benevolent character he unfolded many truths relating to the Universal Father, to his own character, to the condition, duties, and prospects of mankind, to the perfection and true happiness of the human soul, to a future state of retribution, to

the terms of forgiveness, to the means of virtue, and of everlasting life. Now whenever we teach, on the authority of Jesus, any doctrine or precept included in this extensive system, we "preach Christ." When, for instance, we inculcate on his authority the duties of forgiving enemies, of denying ourselves, of hungering after righteousness, we "preach Christ" as truly as when we describe his passion on the cross, or the purpose and the importance of his sufferings.

By the word "Christ" in the text and in many other places, we are to understand his religion rather than his person. Among the Jews nothing was more common than to give the name of a religious teacher to the system of truth which he taught. We see this continually exemplified in the New Testament. Thus, it is said of the Jews, "They have Moses and the prophets." What is meant by this? that they had Moses residing in person among them? Certainly not; but that they had his law, his religion. Jesus says, "I came not to destroy the prophets." What did he mean? that he had not come to slay or destroy the prophets who had died ages before his birth? Certainly not; he only intended that his doctrines were suited to confirm, not to invalidate, the writings of these holy men. According to the same form of speech, Stephen was accused of blasphemy against Moses, because some of his remarks were construed into a reproach on the law of Moses. These passages are sufficient to show us, that a religion was often called by the name of its teacher; and conformably to this usage, when Paul says, "We preach Christ," we ought to understand him as affirming, that he preached the whole system of doctrines and duties which Christ taught, whether they related to Jesus himself, or to any other subject.

But there is one passage more decisive on this point than any which I have adduced. In the Acts of the Apostles,* James says, "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogue every Sabbath-day." Here we find the Apostle declaring, that in every city there were men who *preached Moses;* and we are told in what this preaching consisted; "Moses is *read* in the synagogue every Sabbath-day." No one, acquainted with the ancient services of the synagogue, can suppose, for a moment, that the character and offices of Moses were the themes of the Jewish teachers every Sabbath, and that they preached nothing else. It was their custom to read the books of the law in course, and to offer comments upon obscure or important passages. In many parts of these books the name of Moses is not mentioned. We have whole chapters about the tabernacle, and about the rites of cleansing from the leprosy. But, according to James, when these portions were read and explained, Moses was preached; not because his character was the subject, but because the instructions contained in these chapters were a part of the religion which he was appointed to communicate to the children of Israel. The name of the teacher was given to his doctrine. This form of speech was not peculiar to the Jews; all nations have probably adopted it. At the present day, nothing is more common than to hear, that Locke, or Newton, or some other distinguished philosopher, is published, or taught; not that his personal character and history are made public, but his system of doctrines. In the same way, Christ is preached, published, proclaimed when his instructions are delivered, although these instructions

* Acts xv. 21.

may relate to other topics beside his own offices and character.

I hope I shall not be misunderstood in the remarks which I have now made. Do not imagine, that I would exclude from the pulpit, discourses on the excellence of Jesus Christ. The truths which relate to Jesus himself, are among the most important which the Gospel reveals. The relations which Jesus Christ sustains to the world, are so important and so tender; the concern which he has expressed in human salvation, so strong and disinterested; the blessings of pardon and immortal life which he brings, so undeserved and unbounded; his character is such a union of moral beauty and grandeur; his example is at once so pure and so persuasive; the events of his life, his miracles, his sufferings, his resurrection and ascension, and his offices of intercessor and judge, are so strengthening to faith, hope, and charity, that his ministers should dwell on his name with affectionate veneration, and should delight to exhibit him to the gratitude, love, imitation, and confidence of mankind.

But, whilst the Christian minister is often to insist on the life, the character, the offices, and the benefits of Jesus Christ, let him not imagine that he is preaching Christ only when these are his themes. If he confine himself to these, he will not in the full sense of the word preach Christ; for this is to preach the whole religion of Jesus, and this religion is of vast extent. It regards man in his diversified and ever-multiplying relations to his Creator and to his fellow-creatures, to the present state and to all future ages. Its aim is, to instruct and quicken us to cultivate an enlarged virtue; to cultivate our whole intellectual and moral nature.

It collects and offers motives to piety from the past and from the future, from heaven and hell, from nature and experience, from human example, and from the imitable excellences of God, from the world without and the world within us. The Gospel of Christ is indeed an inexhaustible treasury of moral and religious truth. Jesus, the first and best of evangelical teachers, did not confine himself to a few topics, but manifested himself to be the wisdom of God by the richness and variety of his instructions. To preach Christ is to unfold, as far as our feeble and narrow powers permit, all the doctrines, duties, and motives, which are recorded in the Gospels and in the writings of his inspired Apostles.

It is not intended by these remarks, that all the instructions of Christ are of equal importance, and that all are to be urged with equal frequency and zeal. Some undoubtedly are of greater moment and of more universal application than others. But a minister of a sound and candid mind, will be very cautious lest he assign so high a rank to a few doctrines, that the rest will sink into comparative insignificance, and almost fade from the minds of his hearers. He will labor to give enlarged and harmonious views of all the principles of Christianity, recollecting that each receives support from the rest, and that no doctrine or precept will exert its proper influence, if swelled into disproportioned importance, or detached from the truths which ought to modify and restrain it.

It has been the object of these remarks, to show, that preaching Christ does not imply that the offices and character of Christ are to be made perpetually the subjects of discourse. Where this idea prevails, it too often happens that the religion of Jesus is very partial-

ly preached. A few topics are repeated without end. Many delightful and ennobling views of Christianity are seldom or never exhibited. The duties of the Gospel receive but a cursory attention. Religion is thought to consist in a fervid state of mind, produced by the constant contemplation of a few affecting ideas; whilst the only acceptable religion, which consists in living "soberly, righteously, and godly in the world," seems to be undervalued as quite an inferior attainment. Where this mistake prevails, we too often discover a censorious spirit among hearers, who pronounce with confidence on this and another minister, that they do not preach Christ, because their discourses do not turn on a few topics in relation to the Saviour, which are thought to contain the whole of Christianity. Very often the labors of a pious and upright minister are defeated by this prejudice; nor must he wonder, if he find himself decried, as an enemy to the faith, by those whose want of education or capacity confines them to the narrowest views of the Christian system. — May I be permitted, with deference and respect, to beseech Christian ministers not to encourage by example this spirit of censure among private Christians. There is no lesson which we can teach our hearers more easily, than to think contemptuously and to speak bitterly of other classes of Christians, and especially of their teachers. Let us never forget, that we none of us preach Christ in the full import of that phrase. None of us can hope that we give a complete representation of the religion of our Master; that we exhibit every doctrine without defect or without excess, in its due proportions, and in its just connexions. We of necessity communicate a portion of our own weakness and darkness to the religion which

we dispense. The degree of imperfection indeed differs in different teachers; but none are free from the universal frailty, and none are authorized to take the seat of judgment, and, on the ground of imagined errors, to deny to others, whose lives are as spotless as their own, a conscientious purpose to learn and to teach the whole counsel of God.

II. Having thus considered what is intended by preaching Christ, I proceed to consider, secondly, for what end Christ is to be preached. We preach Christ, says the Apostle, "warning every man, and teaching every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;" that is, perfect in the religion of Christ, or a perfect Christian. From the passage we derive a most important sentiment, confirmed by the whole New Testament, that the great design of all the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel, is to exalt the character, to promote eminent purity of heart and life, to make men perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect. For what end then is Christianity to be preached? The answer is plain. We must preach, not to make fiery partisans, and to swell the number of a sect; not to overwhelm the mind with fear, or to heat it with feverish rapture; not to form men to the decencies of life, to a superficial goodness, which will secure the admiration of mankind. All these effects fall infinitely short of the great end of the Christian ministry. We should preach, that we may make men perfect Christians; perfect, not according to the standard of the world, but according to the law of Christ; perfect in heart and in life, in solitude and in society, in the great and in the common concerns of life. Here is the purpose

of Christian preaching. In this, as in a common centre, all the truths of the Gospel meet; to this they all conspire; and no doctrine has an influence on salvation, any farther than it is an aid and excitement to the perfecting of our nature.

The Christian minister needs often to be reminded of this great end of his office, the perfection of the human character. He is too apt to rest in low attainments himself, and to be satisfied with low attainments in others. He ought never to forget the great distinction and glory of the Gospel, — that it is designed to perfect human nature. All the precepts of this divine system are marked by a sublime character. It demands that our piety be fervent, our benevolence unbounded, and our thirst for righteousness strong and insatiable. It enjoins a virtue which does not stop at what is positively prescribed, but which is prodigal of service to God and to mankind. The Gospel enjoins inflexible integrity, fearless sincerity, fortitude which despises pain and tramples pleasure under foot in the pursuit of duty, and an independence of spirit which no scorn can deter and no example seduce from asserting truth and adhering to the cause which conscience approves. With this spirit of martyrs, this hardness and intrepidity of soldiers of the cross, the Gospel calls us to unite the mildest and meekest virtues; a sympathy which melts over others' woes; a disinterestedness which finds pleasure in toils, and labors for others' good; a humility which loves to bless unseen, and forgets itself in the performance of the noblest deeds. To this perfection of social duty, the Gospel commands us to join a piety which refers every event to the providence of God, and every action to his will; a love which counts no service

hard, and a penitence which esteems no judgment severe ; a gratitude which offers praise even in adversity ; a holy trust unbroken by protracted suffering, and a hope triumphant over death. In one word, it enjoins, that, loving and confiding in Jesus Christ, we make his spotless character, his heavenly life, the model of our own. Such is the sublimity of character which the Gospel demands, and such the end to which our preaching should ever be directed.

I have dwelt on this end of preaching, because it is too often forgotten, and because a stronger conviction of it will give new force and elevation to our instructions. We need to feel more deeply, that we are intrusted with a religion which is designed to ennoble human nature ; which recognises in man the capacities of all that is good, great, and excellent ; and which offers every encouragement and aid to the pursuit of perfection. The Christian minister should often recollect, that man, though propense to evil, has yet powers and faculties which may be exalted and refined to angelic glory ; that he is called by the Gospel to prepare for the community of angels ; that he is formed for unlimited progress in intellectual and moral excellence and felicity. He should often recollect, that in Jesus Christ our nature has been intimately united with the divine, and that in Jesus it is already enthroned in heaven. Familiarized to these generous conceptions, the Christian preacher, whilst he faithfully unfolds to men their guilt and danger, should also unfold their capacities of greatness ; should reveal the splendor of that destiny to which they are called by Christ ; should labor to awaken within them aspirations after a nobler character and a higher existence, and to inflame them

with the love of all the graces and virtues with which Jesus came to enrich and adorn the human soul. In this way he will prove that he understands the true and great design of the Gospel and the ministry, which is nothing less than the perfection of the human character.

May I be permitted to say, that perhaps one of the greatest defects in our preaching, is, that it is not sufficiently directed to ennoble and elevate the minds of men. It does not breathe a sufficiently generous spirit. It appeals too constantly to the lowest principle of human nature; I mean the principle of fear, which under judicious excitement is indeed of great and undoubted use, but which, as every parent knows, when habitually awakened, is always found to debase the mind, to break the spirit, to give tameness to the character, and to chill the best affections. Perhaps one cause of the limited influence of Christianity, is, that, as it is too often exhibited, it seems adapted to form an abject, servile character, rather than to raise its disciples to true greatness and dignity. Perhaps, were Christianity more habitually regarded as a system, whose great design it is to infuse honorable sentiments, magnanimity, energy, an ingenuous love of God, a superiority to the senses, a spirit of self-sacrifice, a virtue akin to that of heaven, its reception would be more cordial, and its influence more extensive, more happy, more accordant with its great end, the perfection of human nature.

III. Having thus considered the end of Christian preaching, I now come to offer, in the third place, a few remarks on the best method of accomplishing it; and here I find myself obliged to omit a great variety

of topics, and can only offer one or two of principal importance. That the Gospel may attain its end, may exert the most powerful and ennobling influence on the human character, it must be addressed at once to the understanding and to the heart. It must be so preached as to be firmly believed and deeply felt. — To secure to Christianity this firm belief, I have only time to observe, that it should be preached in a *rational* manner. By this I mean, that a Christian minister should beware of offering interpretations of Scripture, which are repugnant to any clear discoveries of reason or dictates of conscience. This admonition is founded upon the very obvious principle, that a revelation from God must be adapted to the rational and moral nature which he has conferred on man; that God can never contradict in his Word what he has himself written on the human heart, or teaches in his works and providence. Every man who reads the Bible knows, that, like other books, it has many passages which admit a variety of interpretations. Human language does not admit entire precision. It has often been observed by philosophers, that the most familiar sentences owe their perspicuity, not so much to the definiteness of the language, as to an almost incredible activity of the mind, which selects from a variety of meanings that which each word demands, and assigns such limits to every phrase as the intention of the speaker, his character and situation, require. In addition to this source of obscurity, to which all writings are exposed, we must remember that the Scriptures were written in a distant age, in a foreign language, by men who were unaccustomed to the systematic arrangements of modern times, and who, although inspired, were left to communicate their thoughts

in the style most natural or habitual. Can we wonder, then, that they admit a variety of interpretations? Now, we owe it to a book, which records, as we believe, revelations from Heaven, and which is plainly designed for the moral improvement of the race, to favor those explications of obscure passages, which are seen to harmonize with the moral attributes of God, and with the acknowledged teachings of nature and conscience. All those interpretations of the Gospel, which strike the mind at once as inconsistent with a righteous government of the universe, which require of man what is disproportioned to his nature, or which shock any clear conviction which our experience has furnished, cannot be viewed with too jealous an eye by him, who, revering Christianity, desires to secure to it an intelligent belief.

It is in vain to say, that the first and most obvious meaning of Scripture is always to be followed, no matter where it leads. I answer, that the first and most obvious meaning of a passage, written in a foreign language, and in remote antiquity, is very often false, and such as farther inquiry compels us to abandon. I answer, too, that all sects of Christians agree, and are forced to agree, in frequently forsaking the literal sense, on account of its incongruity with acknowledged truth. There is, in fact, no book in the world, which requires us more frequently to restrain unlimited expressions, to qualify the letter by the spirit, and to seek the meaning in the state and customs of the writer and of his age, than the New Testament. No book is written in a more popular, figurative, and animated style, the very style which requires the most constant exercise of judgment in the reader. The Scriptures are not a frigid digest of Christianity, as if this religion were a mere code of civil laws.

They give us the Gospel warm from the hearts of its preachers. The language is not that of logicians, not the language of retired and inanimate speculation, but of affection, of zeal, of men who burned to convey deep and vivid impressions of the truth. In understanding such writers, moral feeling is often a better guide than a servile adherence to the literal and most obvious meaning of every word and phrase. It may be said of the New as well as the Old Testament, that sometimes the letter killeth whilst the spirit giveth life. Almost any system may be built on the New Testament by a commentator, who, forgetting the general scope of Christianity and the lessons of nature and experience, shall impose on every passage the literal signification which is first offered to the mind. The Christian minister should avail himself, in his exposition of the Divine Word, of the aids of learning and criticism, and also of the aids of reason and conscience. Those interpretations of difficult passages, which approve themselves to his clear and established conceptions of rectitude, and to his devout and benevolent affections, he should regard with a favorable eye ; whilst those of an opposite character should be regarded with great distrust.

I have said, that this rational method of preaching Christianity is important, if we would secure a firm belief to Christianity. Some men may indeed be reconciled to an unreasonable religion ; and terror, that passion which more than any other unsettles the intellect, may silence every objection to the most contradictory and degrading principles. But in general the understanding and conscience cannot be entirely subdued. They resist the violence which is done them. A lurking incredulity mingles with the attempt to believe what con-

tradicts the highest principles of our nature. Particularly the most intelligent part of the community, who will ultimately govern public sentiment, will doubt and disbelieve the unreasonable system, which, perhaps, they find it prudent to acknowledge ; and will either convert it into an instrument of policy, or seize a favorable moment for casting off its restraints and levelling its institutions with the dust. Thus important is it that Christianity should be recommended to the understandings of men.

But this is not enough. It is also most important that the Gospel should be recommended to the heart. Christianity should be so preached, as to interest the affections, to awaken contrition and fear, veneration and love, gratitude and hope. Some preachers, from observing the pernicious effects of violent and exclusive appeals to the passions, have fallen into an opposite error, which has rendered the labors of their lives almost wholly unfruitful. They have addressed men as mere creatures of intellect ; they have forgotten, that affection is as essential to our nature as thought, that action requires motive, that the union of reason and sensibility is the health of the soul, and that without moral feeling there can be no strength of moral purpose. They have preached ingeniously, and the hearer has pronounced the teaching true. But the truth, coldly imparted, and coldly received, has been forgotten as fast as heard ; no energy of will has been awakened ; no resistance to habit and passion been called forth ; perhaps not a momentary purpose of self-improvement has glanced through the mind. Preaching, to be effectual, must be as various as our nature. The sun warms, at the same moment that it enlightens ; and, unless religious truth be

addressed at once to the reason and the affections, unless it kindles whilst it guides, it is a useless splendor ; it leaves the heart barren ; it produces no fruits of godliness. Let the Christian minister, then, preach the Gospel with earnestness, with affection, with a heart warmed by his subject, not thinking of himself, not seeking applause, but solicitous for the happiness of mankind, tenderly concerned for his people, awake to the solemnities of eternity, and deeply impressed with the worth of the human soul, with the glory and happiness to which it may be exalted, and with the misery and ruin into which it will be plunged by irreligion and vice. Let him preach, not to amuse, but to convince and awaken ; not to excite a momentary interest, but a deep and lasting seriousness ; not to make his hearers think of the preacher, but of themselves, of their own characters and future condition. Let him labor, by delineating with unaffected ardor the happiness of virtue, by setting forth religion in its most attractive forms, by displaying the paternal character of God, and the love of Christ which was stronger than death, by unfolding the purity and blessedness of the heavenly world, by revealing to the soul its own greatness, and by persuasion, by entreaty, by appeals to the best sentiments of human nature, by speaking from a heart convinced of immortality ; let him labor, by these methods, to touch and to soften his hearers, to draw them to God and duty, to awaken gratitude and love, a sublime hope and a generous desire of exalted goodness. And let him also labor, by solemn warning, by teaching men their responsibility, by setting before sinners the aggravations of their guilt, by showing them the ruin and immediate wretchedness wrought by moral evil in the soul, and by pointing them to approach-

ing death, and the retributions of the future world; let him labor, by these means, to reach the consciences of those whom higher motives will not quicken, to break the slumbers of the worldly, to cut off every false hope, and to persuade the sinner, by a salutary terror, to return to God, and to seek, with a new earnestness, virtue, glory, and eternal life.

NOTE

ON THE FIRST HEAD OF THE PRECEDING DISCOURSE.

The error which I have opposed on the subject of 'preaching Christ, may be traced in a great measure to what appears to me a wrong interpretation of the two first chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. In these chapters, Paul says, that he "determined to know nothing among the Corinthians, save Jesus Christ and him crucified," and speaks once and again of "preaching Christ crucified," &c. It has been supposed, that the Apostle here intended to select the particular point on which preaching should chiefly turn, and that we have his authority for censuring a discourse which does not relate immediately to the character of Christ, and especially to his sufferings on the cross. But I think that a little attention to the circumstances of the Apostle and of the Corinthians will show us, that Paul referred to the religion of Jesus generally, as the subject of his preaching, and not to a very limited part of it.

Corinth, being the most commercial city of Greece, was inhabited by Jews as well as Greeks. These Jews, as Paul tells us, "wanted a sign," just as the Pharisees in the time of Christ demanded "a sign from heaven." That is, they wanted a Messiah who should be marked out to them by a visible descent from heaven, or by some glorious appearance from heaven, or by some outward majesty which should be a pledge of his breaking the Roman yoke, and raising Judea to the empire of the

world. They wanted a splendid and temporal Messiah. The Greeks, on the other hand, who were a speculative people, wanted *wisdom*, or a system of philosophy, and could hear nothing patiently but the subtile disputations and studied harangues with which they were amused by those who pretended to wisdom. Such was the state of Corinth, when Paul entered it. Had he brought with him an account of a triumphant Messiah, or an acute philosopher, he would have been received with eagerness. But none were desirous to hear the simple religion of Jesus of Nazareth, who proved his mission, not by subtilties of eloquence, but by miracles evincing the power of God, and who died at last on the ignominious cross. Paul, however, in opposition to Jew and Greek, determined to know nothing of a worldly Messiah, nothing of any old or new scheme of philosophy ; but to know and to preach Jesus Christ, and to exhibit him in a light which Judaism and philosophy would alike abhor, as crucified for the recovery of men from error, sin, and condemnation. In other words, he resolved to preach the religion of Jesus, in its greatest simplicity, without softening its most offensive feature, the cross of its author, or without borrowing any thing from Moses or from any Gentile philosopher, to give currency to his doctrines. This is the amount of what Paul teaches in these chapters.

We must not imagine, when we read these chapters, that Corinth was a city of professing Christians ; that among these Christians a difference of opinion had arisen as to the proper subjects of Christian preaching, and that Paul intended to specify the topic on which ministers should chiefly or exclusively insist. This, I fear, is the common impression under which this portion of Scripture is read ; but this is altogether erroneous. No controversy of this kind existed ; and Paul, in these chapters, had not the most distant idea of recommending one part

of the Gospel in preference to others, but intended to recommend the whole Gospel, the whole religion of Jesus Christ, in distinction from Judaism and Gentile philosophy. The dangers of the Corinthian Christians required that he should employ every effort to secure their fidelity to the simple Gospel of Jesus. Having been educated in the Jewish or Heathen religions; living in the midst of Jews and Heathens; hearing perpetually, from one class, that the Messiah was to be a triumphant prince, and that without submission to the law of Moses, no one could partake his blessings; and hearing, from the other, perpetual praises of this and another philosopher, and perpetual derision of the Gospel, because in its doctrines and style it bore no resemblance to the refinements and rhetoric of their most celebrated sages; the Corinthian Christians, in these trying circumstances, were strongly tempted to assimilate the Gospel to the prevalent religions, to blend with it foreign doctrines, to keep the humiliation of its author out of sight, and to teach it as a system of philosophy resting on subtile reasoning rather than on miracles and the authority of God. To save them from this danger, a danger which at present we can hardly estimate, the Apostle reminded them, that when he came to them he came not with "excellency of speech and with enticing words of man's wisdom," but in demonstration of the Spirit and of miraculous powers; that he did not comply with the demands of Greek or Jew; that he preached a crucified Messiah, and no other teacher or deliverer; and that he always insisted, that the religion of Jesus, unaided by Judaism or philosophy, was able to make men wise to salvation. He also reminded them, that this preaching, however branded as foolishness, had proved divinely powerful, and had saved them from that ignorance of God, from which human wisdom had been unable to deliver them. These remarks, I hope, will as-

sist common readers in understanding the chapters under consideration.

We are too apt, in reading the New Testament, and particularly the Epistles, to forget, that the Gospel was a new religion, and that the Apostles were called to preach Jesus to those, who, perhaps, had never before heard his name, and whose prejudices and passions prepared them to contemn and reject his claims. In these circumstances, they had to begin at the very foundation, to prove to the unbelieving world that Jesus was the Messiah, or sent from God to instruct and save mankind. This is often called "preaching Christ," especially in the Acts. — When converts were made, the work of the Apostles was not ended. These converts wished to bring with them a part of their old religion into the church; and some of the Jews even insisted that obedience to Moses was essential to salvation. These errors the Apostles resolutely opposed, and, having previously established the Messiahship of Jesus, they next proceeded to establish the sufficiency and perfection of his religion, to show that faith in him, or reception of his Gospel, was all that was required to salvation. This is sometimes called "preaching Christ." — These difficulties, which called the Apostles to so much anxiety and toil, are now in a great measure removed. Christian ministers, at the present day, are not often called to preach Christ in opposition to the infidel, and never in opposition to the weak convert who would incorporate Judaism or Gentile philosophy with Christianity. The great foundation, on which the Apostles spent so much strength, is now firmly laid. Our hearers generally acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, sent by God to be the light of the world, and "able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him." We are therefore seldom called to preach Christ in the senses which have just been considered, and our preaching must of

course differ in a measure from that of the Apostles. But there is another sense of preaching Christ, involved in both the preceding, in which our work precisely accords with theirs. Like them, we are to unfold to those who acknowledge Jesus as their Lord, all the truths, motives, and precepts, which he has left to guide and quicken men to excellence, and to prepare them for a happy immortality.

WAR.

DISCOURSE

BEFORE THE

CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS.

BOSTON, 1816.

ISAIAH ii. 4: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

I HAVE chosen a subject, which may seem at first view not altogether appropriate to the present occasion, the subject of WAR. It may be thought, that an address to an assembly composed chiefly of the ministers of religion, should be confined to the duties, dangers, encouragements of the sacred office. But I have been induced to select this topic, because, after the slumber of ages, Christians seem to be awakening to a sense of the pacific character of their religion, and because I understood, that this Convention were at this anniversary to consider the interesting question, whether no method could be devised for enlightening the public mind on the nature and guilt of war. I was unwilling that this subject should be approached and dismissed as an ordinary affair. I feared, that, in the pressure of business, we

might be satisfied with the expression of customary disapprobation; and that, having in this way relieved our consciences, we should relapse into our former indifference, and continue to hear the howlings of this dreadful storm of human passions with as much unconcern as before. I resolved to urge on you the duty, and I hoped to excite in you the purpose, of making some new and persevering efforts for the abolition of this worst vestige of barbarism, this grossest outrage on the principles of Christianity. The day I trust is coming, when Christians will look back with gratitude and affection on those men, who, in ages of conflict and bloodshed, cherished generous hopes of human improvement, withstood the violence of corrupt opinion, held forth, amidst the general darkness, the pure and mild light of Christianity, and thus ushered in a new and peaceful era in the history of mankind. May you, my brethren, be included in the grateful recollection of that day.

The *miseries* and *crimes* of war, its *sources*, its *remedies*, will be the subjects of our present attention.

In detailing its miseries and crimes, there is no temptation to recur to unreal or exaggerated horrors. No depth of coloring can approach reality. It is lamentable, that we need a delineation of the calamities of war, to rouse us to exertion. The mere idea of human beings employing every power and faculty in the work of mutual destruction, ought to send a shuddering through the frame. But on this subject, our sensibilities are dreadfully sluggish and dead. Our ordinary sympathies seem to forsake us, when war is named. The sufferings and death of a single fellow-being often excite a tender and active compassion; but we hear without emotion of thousands enduring every variety of woe in

war. A single murder in peace thrills through our frames. The countless murders of war are heard as an amusing tale. The execution of a criminal depresses the mind, and philanthropy is laboring to substitute milder punishments for death. But benevolence has hardly made an effort to snatch from sudden and untimely death, the innumerable victims immolated on the altar of war. This insensibility demands that the miseries and crimes of war should be placed before us with minuteness, with energy, with strong and indignant feeling.

The miseries of war may be easily conceived from its very nature. By war, we understand the resort of nations to force, violence, and the most dreaded methods of destruction and devastation. In war, the strength, skill, courage, energy, and resources of a whole people are concentrated for the infliction of pain and death. The bowels of the earth are explored, the most active elements combined, the resources of art and nature exhausted, to increase the power of man in destroying his fellow-creatures.

Would you learn what destruction man, when thus aided, can spread around him? Look, then, at that extensive region, desolate and overspread with ruins; its forests rent, as if blasted by lightning; its villages prostrated, as by an earthquake; its fields barren, as if swept by storms. Not long ago, the sun shone on no happier spot. But ravaging armies prowled over it; war frowned on it; and its fruitfulness and happiness are fled. Here thousands and ten thousands were gathered from distant provinces, not to embrace as brethren, but to renounce the tie of brotherhood; and thousands, in the vigor of life, when least prepared for

death, were hewn down and scattered like chaff before the whirlwind.

Repair, my friends, in thought, to a field of recent battle. Here, are heaps of slain, weltering in their own blood, their bodies mangled, their limbs shattered, and almost every vestige of the human form and countenance destroyed. Here, are multitudes trodden under foot, and the war-horse has left the trace of his hoof in many a crushed and mutilated frame. Here, are severer sufferers; they live, but live without hope or consolation. Justice despatches the criminal with a single stroke; but the victims of war, falling by casual, undirected blows, often expire in lingering agony, their deep groans moving no compassion, their limbs writhing on the earth with pain, their lips parched with a burning thirst, their wounds open to the chilling air, the memory of home rushing on their minds, but not a voice of friendship or comfort reaching their ears. Amidst this scene of horrors, you see the bird and beast of prey gorging themselves with the dead or dying, and human plunderers rifling the warm and almost palpitating remains of the slain. If you extend your eye beyond the immediate field of battle, and follow the track of the victorious and pursuing army, you see the roads strewed with the dead; you see scattered flocks, and harvests trampled under foot, the smoking ruins of cottages, and the miserable inhabitants flying in want and despair; and even yet, the horrors of a single battle are not exhausted. Some of the deepest pangs which it inflicts, are silent, retired, enduring, to be read in the widow's countenance, in the unprotected orphan, in the aged parent, in affection cherishing the memory of the slain, and weeping that it could not minister to their last pangs.

I have asked you to traverse, in thought, a field of battle. There is another scene often presented in war, perhaps more terrible. I refer to a besieged city. The most horrible pages in histroy are those which record the reduction of strongly fortified places. In a besieged city, are collected all descriptions and ages of mankind, women, children, the old, the infirm. Day and night, the weapons of death and conflagration fly around them They see the approaches of the foe, the trembling bulwark, and the fainting strength of their defenders. They are worn with famine, and on famine presses pestilence. At length the assault is made, every barrier is broken down, and a lawless soldiery, exasperated by resistance, and burning with lust and cruelty, are scattered through the streets. The domestic retreat is violated; and even the house of God is no longer a sanctuary. Venerable age is no protection, female purity no defence. Is woman spared amidst the slaughter of father, brother, husband, and son? She is spared for a fate, which makes death in comparison a merciful doom. With such heart-rending scenes history abounds; and what better fruits can you expect from war?

These views are the most obvious and striking which war presents. There are more secret influences, appealing less powerfully to the senses and imagination, but deeply affecting to a reflecting and benevolent mind. —Consider, first, the condition of those who are immediately engaged in war? The sufferings of soldiers from battle we have seen; but their sufferings are not limited to the period of conflict. The whole of war is a succession of exposures too severe for human nature. Death employs other weapons than the sword. It is computed, that in ordinary wars, greater numbers per

ish by sickness than in battle. Exhausted by long and rapid marches, by unwholesome food, by exposure to storms, by excessive labor under a burning sky through the day, and by interrupted and restless sleep on the damp ground and in the chilling atmosphere of night, thousands after thousands of the young pine away and die. They anticipated that they should fall, if to fall should be their lot, in what they called the field of honor; but they perish in the inglorious and crowded hospital, surrounded with sights and sounds of woe, far from home and every friend, and denied those tender offices which sickness and expiring nature require.

Consider next the influence of war on the character of those who make it their trade. They let themselves for slaughter, place themselves servile instruments, passive machines, in the hands of rulers, to execute the bloodiest mandates, without a thought on the justice of the cause in which they are engaged. What a school is this for the human character! From men trained in battle to ferocity, accustomed to the perpetration of cruel deeds, accustomed to take human life without sorrow or remorse, habituated to esteem an unthinking courage a substitute for every virtue, encouraged by plunder of prodigality, taught improvidence by perpetual hazard and exposure, restrained only by an iron discipline which is withdrawn in peace, and unfitted by the restless and irregular career of war for the calm and uniform pursuits of ordinary life; from such men, what ought to be expected but contempt of human rights and of the laws of God? From the nature of his calling, the soldier is almost driven to sport with the thought of death, to defy and deride it, and, of course, to banish the thought of that retribution to which it leads; and,

though of all men the most exposed to sudden death, he is too often of all men most unprepared to appear before his Judge.

The influence of war on the community at large, on its prosperity, its morals, and its political institutions, though less striking than on the soldiery, is yet baleful. How often is a community impoverished to sustain a war in which it has no interest? Public burdens are aggravated, whilst the means of sustaining them are reduced. Internal improvements are neglected. The revenue of the state is exhausted in military establishments, or flows through secret channels into the coffers of corrupt men, whom war exalts to power and office. The regular employments of peace are disturbed. Industry in many of its branches is suspended. The laborer, ground with want, and driven to despair by the clamor of his suffering family, becomes a soldier in a cause which he condemns, and thus the country is drained of its most effective population. The people are stripped and reduced, whilst the authors of war retrench not a comfort, and often fatten on the spoils and woes of their country.

The influence of war on the morals of society is also to be deprecated. The suspension of industry multiplies want; and criminal modes of subsistence are the resource of the suffering. Commerce, shackled and endangered, loses its upright and honorable character, and becomes a system of stratagem and collusion. In war, the moral sentiments of a community are perverted by the admiration of military exploits. The milder virtues of Christianity are eclipsed by the baleful lustre thrown round a ferocious courage. The disinterested, the benignant, the merciful, the forgiving, those whom

Jesus has pronounced blessed and honorable, must give place to the hero, whose character is stained not only with blood, but sometimes with the foulest vices, but all whose stains are washed away by victory. War especially injures the moral feelings of a people, by making human nature cheap in their estimation, and human life of as little worth as that of an insect or a brute.

War diffuses through a community unfriendly and malignant passions. Nations, exasperated by mutual injuries, burn for each others' humiliation and ruin. They delight to hear that famine, pestilence, want, defeat, and the most dreadful scourges which Providence sends on a guilty world, are desolating a hostile community. The slaughter of thousands of fellow-beings, instead of awakening pity, flushes them with delirious joy, illuminates the city, and dissolves the whole country in revelry and riot. Thus the heart of man is hardened. His worst passions are nourished. He renounces the bonds and sympathies of humanity. Were the prayers, or rather the curses of warring nations prevalent in heaven, the whole earth would long since have become a desert. The human race, with all their labors and improvements, would have perished under the sentence of universal extermination.

But war not only assails the prosperity and morals of a community; its influence on the political condition is threatening. It arms government with a dangerous patronage, multiplies dependents and instruments of oppression, and generates a power, which, in the hands of the energetic and aspiring, endangers a free constitution. War organizes a body of men, who lose the feelings of the citizen in the soldier; whose habits detach them from the community; whose ruling passion

is devotion to a chief; who are inured in the camp to despotic sway; who are accustomed to accomplish their ends by force, and to sport with the rights and happiness of their fellow-beings; who delight in tumult, adventure, and peril; and turn with disgust and scorn from the quiet labors of peace. Is it wonderful, that such protectors of a state should look with contempt on the weakness of the protected, and should lend themselves base instruments to the subversion of that freedom which they do not themselves enjoy? In a community, in which precedence is given to the military profession, freedom cannot long endure. The encroachments of power at home are expiated by foreign triumphs. The essential interests and rights of the state are sacrificed to a false and fatal glory. Its intelligence and vigor, instead of presenting a bulwark to domestic usurpation, are expended in military achievements. Its most active and aspiring citizens rush to the army, and become subservient to the power which dispenses honor. The nation is victorious, but the recompense of its toils is a yoke as galling as that which it imposes on other communities.

Thus, war is to be ranked among the most dreadful calamities which fall on a guilty world; and, what deserves consideration, it tends to multiply and perpetuate itself without end. It feeds and grows on the blood which it sheds. The passions, from which it springs, gain strength and fury from indulgence. The successful nation, flushed by victory, pants for new laurels; whilst the humbled nation, irritated by defeat, is impatient to redeem its honor and repair its losses. Peace becomes a truce, a feverish repose, a respite to sharpen anew the sword, and to prepare for future struggles.

Under professions of friendship, lurk hatred and distrust; and a spark suffices to renew the mighty conflagration. When from these causes, large military establishments are formed, and a military spirit kindled, war becomes a necessary part of policy. A foreign field must be found for the energies and passions of a martial people. To disband a numerous and veteran soldiery, would be to let loose a dangerous horde on society. The blood-hounds must be sent forth on other communities, lest they rend the bosom of their own country. Thus war extends and multiplies itself. No sooner is one storm scattered, than the sky is darkened with the gathering horrors of another. Accordingly, war has been the mournful legacy of every generation to that which succeeds it. Every age has had its conflicts. Every country has in turn been the seat of devastation and slaughter. The dearest interest and rights of every nation have been again and again committed to the hazards of a game, of all others the most uncertain, and in which, from its very nature, success too often attends on the fiercest courage and the basest fraud.

Such, my friends, is an unexaggerated, and, I will add, a faint delineation of the miseries of war; and to all these miseries and crimes the human race have been continually exposed, for no worthier cause, than to enlarge an empire already tottering under its unwieldy weight, to extend an iron despotism, to support some idle pretension, to repel some unreal or exaggerated injury. For no worthier cause, human blood has been poured out as water, and millions of rational and immortal beings have been driven like sheep to the field of slaughter.

Having considered the crimes and miseries of war, I proceed, as I proposed, to inquire into its sources; an important branch of our subject, for it is only by a knowledge of the sources, that we can be guided to the remedies of war. And here, I doubt not, many will imagine that the first place ought to be given to malignity and hatred. But justice to human nature requires, that we ascribe to national animosities a more limited operation than is usually assigned to them, in the production of this calamity. It is indeed true, that ambitious men, who have an interest in war, too often accomplish their views by appealing to the malignant feelings of a community, by exaggerating its wrongs, ridiculing its forbearance, and reviving ancient jealousies and resentments. But it is believed, that, were not malignity and revenge aided by the concurrence of higher principles, the false splendor of this barbarous custom might easily be obscured, and its ravages stayed.

One of the great springs of war may be found in a very strong and general propensity of human nature, in the love of excitement, of emotion, of strong interest; a propensity which gives a charm to those bold and hazardous enterprises which call forth all the energies of our nature. No state of mind, not even positive suffering, is more painful than the want of interesting objects. The vacant soul preys on itself, and often rushes with impatience from the security which demands no effort, to the brink of peril. This part of human nature is seen in the kind of pleasures which have always been preferred. Why has the first rank among sports been given to the chase? Because its difficulties, hardships, hazards, tumults, awaken the mind, and give to it a new consciousness of existence, and a deep

feeling of its powers. What is the charm which attaches the statesman to an office which almost weighs him down with labor and an appalling responsibility? He finds much of his compensation in the powerful emotion and interest, awakened by the very hardships of his lot, by conflict with vigorous minds, by the opposition of rivals, and by the alternations of success and defeat. What hurries to the gaming table the man of prosperous fortune and ample resource? The dread of apathy, the love of strong feeling and of mental agitation. A deeper interest is felt in hazarding, than in securing wealth, and the temptation is irresistible. One more example of this propensity may be seen in the attachment of pirates and highwaymen to their dreadful employment. Its excess of peril has given it a terrible interest; and to a man who has long conversed with its dangers, the ordinary pursuits of life are vapid, tasteless, and disgusting. We have here one spring of war. War is of all games the deepest, awakening most powerfully the soul, and, of course, presenting powerful attraction to those restless and adventurous minds, which pant for scenes of greater experiment and exposure than peace affords. The savage, finding in his uncultivated modes of life few objects of interest, few sources of emotion, burns for war as a field for his restless energy. Civilized men, too, find a pleasure in war, as an excitement of the mind. They follow, with an eager concern, the movements of armies, and wait the issue of battles with a deep suspense, an alternation of hope and fear, inconceivably more interesting than the unvaried uniformity of peaceful pursuits.

Another powerful principle of our nature, which is the spring of war, is the passion for superiority, for

triumph, for power. The human mind is aspiring, impatient of inferiority, and eager for preëminence and control. I need not enlarge on the predominance of this passion in rulers, whose love of power is influenced by the possession, and who are ever restless to extend their sway. It is more important to observe, that, were this desire restrained to the breasts of rulers, war would move with a sluggish pace. But the passion for power and superiority is universal; and as every individual, from his intimate union with the community, is accustomed to appropriate its triumphs to himself, there is a general promptness to engage in any contest, by which the community may obtain an ascendency over other nations. The desire, that our country should surpass all others, would not be criminal, did we understand in what respects it is most honorable for a nation to excel; did we feel, that the glory of a state consists in intellectual and moral superiority, in preeminence of knowledge, freedom, and purity. But to the mass of a people, this form of preëminence is too refined and unsubstantial. There is another kind of triumph, which they better understand, the triumph of physical power, triumph in battle, triumph, not over the minds, but the territory of another state. Here is a palpable, visible superiority; and for this, a people are willing to submit to severe privations. A victory blots out the memory of their sufferings, and in boasting of their extended power, they find a compensation for many woes.

I now proceed to another powerful spring of war; and it is the admiration of the brilliant qualities displayed in war. These qualities, more than all things, have prevented an impression of the crimes and miseries

of this savage custom. Many delight in war, not for its carnage and woes, but for its valor and apparent magnanimity, for the self-command of the hero, the fortitude which despises suffering, the resolution which courts danger, the superiority of the mind to the body, to sensation, to fear. Let us be just to human nature even in its errors and excesses. Men seldom delight in war, considered merely as a source of misery. When they hear of battles, the picture which rises to their view is not what it should be, a picture of extreme wretchedness, of the wounded, the mangled, the slain. These horrors are hidden under the splendor of those mighty energies, which break forth amidst the perils of conflict, and which human nature contemplates with an intense and heart-thrilling delight. Attention hurries from the heaps of the slaughtered to the victorious chief, whose single mind pervades and animates a host, and directs with stern composure the storm of battle; and the ruin which he spreads is forgotten in admiration of his power. This admiration has, in all ages, been expressed by the most unequivocal signs. Why that garland woven? that arch erected? that festive board spread? These are tributes to the warrior. Whilst the peaceful sovereign, who scatters blessings with the silence and constancy of Providence, is received with a faint applause, men assemble in crowds to hail the conqueror, perhaps a monster in human form, whose private life is blackened with lust and crime, and whose greatness is built on perfidy and usurpation. Thus, war is the surest and speediest road to renown; and war will never cease, while the field of battle is the field of glory, and the most luxuriant laurels grow from a root nourished with blood.

Another cause of war is a false patriotism. It is a natural and generous impulse of nature to love the country which gave us birth, by whose institutions we have been moulded, by whose laws defended, and with whose soil and scenery innumerable associations of early years, of domestic affection, and of friendship, have been formed. But this sentiment often degenerates into a narrow, partial, exclusive attachment, alienating us from other branches of the human family, and instigating to aggression on other states. In ancient times, this principle was developed with wonderful energy, and sometimes absorbed every other sentiment. To the Roman, Rome was the universe. Other nations were of no value but to grace her triumphs, and illustrate her power; and he, who in private life would have disdained injustice and oppression, exulted in the successful violence by which other nations were bound to the chariot-wheels of this mistress of the world. This spirit still exists. The tie of country is thought to absolve men from the obligations of universal justice and humanity. Statesmen and rulers are expected to build up their own country at the expense of others; and, in the false patriotism of the citizen, they have a security for any outrages, which are sanctioned by success.

Let me mention one other spring of war. I mean the impressions we receive in early life. In our early years, we know war only as it offers itself to us at a review; not arrayed in terror, not stalking over fields of the slain, and desolated regions, its eye flashing with fury, and its sword reeking with blood. War, as we first see it, is decked with gay and splendid trappings, and wears a countenance of joy. It moves with a measured and graceful step to the sound of the heart-stirring

fife and drum. Its instruments of death wound only the air. Such is war ; the youthful eye is dazzled with its ornaments ; the youthful heart dances to its animated sounds. It seems a pastime full of spirit and activity, the very sport in which youth delights. These false views of war are confirmed by our earliest reading. We are intoxicated with the exploits of the conqueror, as recorded in real history or in glowing fiction. We follow, with a sympathetic ardor, his rapid and triumphant career in battle, and, unused as we are to suffering and death, forget the fallen and miserable who are crushed under his victorious car. Particularly by the study of the ancient poets and historians, the sentiments of early and barbarous ages on the subject of war are kept alive in the mind. The trumpet, which roused the fury of Achilles and of the hordes of Greece, still resounds in our ears ; and, though Christians by profession, some of our earliest and deepest impressions are received in the school of uncivilized antiquity. Even where these impressions in favor of war are not received in youth, we yet learn from our early familiarity with it, to consider it as a necessary evil, an essential part of our condition. We become reconciled to it as to a fixed law of our nature ; and consider the thought of its abolition as extravagant as an attempt to chain the winds or arrest the lightning.

I have thus attempted to unfold the principal causes of war. They are, you perceive, of a moral nature. They may be resolved into wrong views of human glory, and into excesses of passions and desires, which, by right direction, would promote the best interests of humanity. From these causes we learn, that this savage

custom is to be repressed by moral means, by salutary influences on the sentiments and principles of mankind. And thus we are led to our last topic, the remedies of war. In introducing the observations which I have to offer on this branch of the subject, I feel myself bound to suggest an important caution. Let not the cause of peace be injured by the assertion of extreme and indefensible principles. I particularly refer to the principle, that war is absolutely, and in all possible cases, unlawful, and prohibited by Christianity. This doctrine is considered, by a great majority of the judicious and enlightened, as endangering the best interests of society; and it ought not therefore to be connected with our efforts for the diffusion of peace, unless it appear to us a clear and indubitable truth. War, as it is commonly waged, is indeed a tremendous evil; but national subjugation is a greater evil than a war of defence; and a community seems to me to possess an indisputable right to resort to such a war, when all other means have failed for the security of its existence or freedom. It is universally admitted, that a community may employ force to repress the rapacity and violence of its own citizens, to disarm and restrain its internal foes; and on what ground can we deny to it the right of repelling the inroads and aggressions of a foreign power? If a government may not lawfully resist a foreign army, invading its territory to desolate and subdue, on what principles can we justify a resistance of a combination of its own citizens for the same injurious purpose? Government is instituted for the very purpose of protecting the community from all violence, no matter by what hands it may be offered; and rulers would be unfaithful to their trust, were they to abandon the rights, interests, and improvements of

society to unprincipled rapacity, whether of domestic or foreign foes.

We are indeed told, that the language of Scripture is, "resist not evil." But the Scriptures are given to us as reasonable beings. We must remember, that, to the renunciation of reason in the interpretation of Scripture, we owe those absurdities, which have sunk Christianity almost to the level of Heathenism. If the precept to "resist not evil," admit no exception, then civil government is prostrated; then the magistrate must, in no case, resist the injurious; then the subject must, in no case, employ the aid of the laws to enforce his rights. The very end and office of government is, to *resist* evil men. For this, the civil magistrate bears the sword; and he should beware of interpretations of the Scriptures which would lead him to bear it in vain. The doctrine of the absolute unlawfulness of war, is thought by its advocates to be necessary to a successful opposition to this barbarous custom. But, were we employed to restore peace to a contentious neighbourhood, we should not consider ourselves as obliged to teach, that self-defence is in every possible case a crime; and equally useless is this principle, in our labors for the pacification of the world. Without taking this uncertain and dangerous ground, we may, and ought to assail war, by assailing the principles and passions which gave it birth, and by improving and exalting the moral sentiments of mankind.

For example; important service may be rendered to the cause of peace, by communicating and enforcing just and elevated sentiments in relation to the true honor of rulers. Let us teach, that the prosperity, and not the extent of a state, is the measure of a ruler's glory; that

the brute force and crooked policy which annex a conquest, are infinitely inferior to the wisdom, justice, and beneficence, which make a country happy ; and that the earth holds not a more abandoned monster, than the sovereign, who, intrusted with the dearest interests of a people, commits them to the dreadful hazards of war, that he may extend his prostituted power, and fill the earth with his worthless name. Let us exhibit to the honor and veneration of mankind the character of the Christian ruler, who, disdaining the cheap and vulgar honor of a conqueror, aspires to a new and more enduring glory ; who, casting away the long-tried weapons of intrigue and violence, adheres with a holy and unshaken confidence to justice and philanthropy, as a nation's best defence ; and who considers himself as exalted by God, only that he may shed down blessings, and be as a beneficent deity to the world.

To these instructions in relation to the true glory of rulers, should be added, just sentiments as to the glory of nations. Let us teach, that the honor of a nation consists, not in the forced and reluctant submission of other states, but in equal laws and free institutions, in cultivated fields and prosperous cities ; in the developement of intellectual and moral power, in the diffusion of knowledge, in magnanimity and justice, in the virtues and blessings of peace. Let us never be weary in reprobating that infernal spirit of conquest, by which a nation becomes the terror and abhorrence of the world, and inevitably prepares a tomb, at best a splendid tomb, for its own liberties and prosperity. Nothing has been more common, than for nations to imagine themselves great and glorious on the ground of foreign conquest, when at home they have been loaded with chains.

Cannot these gross and monstrous delusions be scattered? Can nothing be done to persuade Christian nations to engage in a new and untried race of glory, in generous competitions, in a noble contest for superiority in wise legislation and internal improvements, in the spirit of liberty and humanity?

Another most important method of promoting the cause of peace is, to turn men's admiration from military courage to qualities of real nobleness and dignity. It is time that the childish admiration of courage should give place to more manly sentiments; and, in proportion as we effect this change, we shall shake the main pillar of war, we shall rob military life of its chief attraction. Courage is a very doubtful quality, springing from very different sources, and possessing a corresponding variety of character. Courage sometimes results from mental weakness. Peril is confronted, because the mind wants comprehension to discern its extent. This is often the courage of youth, the courage of unreflecting ignorance, a contempt of peril because peril is but dimly seen. Courage still more frequently springs from physical temperament, from a rigid fibre and iron nerves, and deserves as little praise as the proportion of the form or the beauty of the countenance. Again, every passion, which is strong enough to overcome the passion of fear, and to exclude by its vehemence the idea of danger, communicates at least a temporary courage. Thus revenge, when it burns with great fury, gives a terrible energy to the mind, and has sometimes impelled men to meet certain death, that they might inflict the same fate on an enemy. You see the doubtful nature of courage. It is often associated with the worst vices. The most wonderful examples of it may be found in the history of

pirates and robbers, whose fearlessness is generally proportioned to the insensibility of their consciences, and to the enormity of their crimes. Courage is also exhibited with astonishing power in barbarous countries, where the child is trained to despise the hardships and pains to which he is exposed by his condition; where the absence of civil laws obliges every man to be his own defender; and where, from the imperfection of moral sentiment, corporeal strength and ferocious courage are counted the noblest qualities of human nature. The common courage of armies is equally worthless with that of the pirate and the savage. A considerable part of almost every army, so far from deriving their resolution from love of country and a sense of justice, can hardly be said to have a country, and have been driven into the ranks by necessities, which were generated by vice. These are the brave soldiers, whose praises we hear; brave from the absence of all reflection; prodigal of life, because their vices have robbed life of its blessings; brave from sympathy; brave from the thirst of plunder; and especially brave, because the sword of martial law is hanging over their heads. Accordingly, military courage is easily attained by the most debased and unprincipled men. The common drunkard of the streets, who is enlisted in a fit of intoxication, when thrown into the ranks among the unthinking and profane, subjected to the rigor of martial discipline, familiarized by exposure to the idea of danger, and menaced with death if he betray a symptom of fear, becomes as brave as his officer, whose courage may often be traced to the same dread of punishment, and to fear of severer infamy than attends on the cowardice of the common soldier. Let the tribute of honor be freely and liberally given to the

soldier of principle, who exposes his life for a cause which his conscience approves, and who mingles clemency and mercy with the joy of triumph. But as for the multitudes of military men, who regard war as a trade by which to thrive, who hire themselves to fight and slay in any cause, and who destroy their fellow-beings with as little concern, as the husbandman does the vermin that infest his fields, I know no class of men on whom admiration can more unjustly and more injuriously be bestowed. Let us labor, my brethren, to direct the admiration and love of mankind to another and infinitely higher kind of greatness, to that true magnanimity, which is prodigal of ease and life in the service of God and mankind, and which proves its courage by unshaken adherence, amidst scorn and danger, to truth and virtue. Let the records of past ages be explored, to rescue from oblivion, not the wasteful conqueror, whose path was as the whirlwind, but the benefactors of the human race, martyrs to the interests of freedom and religion, men who have broken the chain of the slave, who have traversed the earth to shed consolation into the cell of the prisoner, or whose sublime faculties have explored and revealed useful and ennobling truths. Can nothing be done to hasten the time, when to such men eloquence and poetry shall offer their glowing homage, — when for these the statue and monument shall be erected, the canvass be animated, and the laurel entwined, — and when to these the admiration of the young shall be directed, as their guides and forerunners to glory and immortality?

I proceed to another method of promoting the cause of peace. Let Christian ministers exhibit with greater clearness and distinctness, than ever they have done,

the pacific and benevolent spirit of Christianity. My brethren, this spirit ought to hold the same place in our preaching, which it holds in the Gospel of our Lord. Instead of being crowded and lost among other subjects, it should stand in the front of Christian graces; it should be inculcated as the life and essence of our religion. We should teach men, that charity is greater than faith and hope; that God is love or benevolence; and that love is the brightest communication of divinity to the human soul. We should exhibit Jesus in all the amiableness of his character, now shedding tears over Jerusalem, and now, his blood on Calvary, and in his last hours recommending his own sublime love as the badge and distinction of his followers. We should teach men, that it is the property of the benevolence of Christianity, to diffuse itself like the light and rain of heaven, to disdain the limits of rivers, mountains, or oceans, by which nations are divided, and to embrace every human being as a brother. Let us never forget, that our preaching is evangelical, just in proportion as it inculcates and awakens this disinterested and unbounded charity; and that our hearers are Christians, just as far and no farther than they delight in peace and beneficence.

It is a painful truth, which ought not to be suppressed, that the pacific influence of the Gospel has been greatly obstructed by the disposition, which has prevailed in all ages, and especially among Christian ministers, to give importance to the peculiarities of sects, and to rear walls of partition between different denominations. Shame ought to cover the face of the believer, when he remembers, that under no religion have intolerance and persecution raged more fiercely than under the Gospel of the

meek and forbearing Saviour. Christians have made the earth to reek with blood and to resound with denunciation. Can we wonder, that, while the spirit of war has been cherished in the very bosom of the church, it has continued to ravage among the nations? Were the true spirit of Christianity to be inculcated with but half the zeal, which has been wasted on doubtful and disputed doctrines, a sympathy, a coöperation might in a very short time be produced among Christians of every nation, most propitious to the pacification of the world. In consequence of the progress of knowledge and the extension of commerce, Christians of both hemispheres are at this moment brought nearer to one another, than at any former period; and an intercourse, founded on religious sympathies, is gradually connecting the most distant regions. What a powerful weapon is furnished by this new bond of union to the ministers and friends of peace! Should not the auspicious moment be seized to inculcate on all Christians, in all regions, that they owe their first allegiance to their common Lord in heaven, whose first, and last, and great command is, love? Should they not be taught to look with a shuddering abhorrence on war, which continually summons to the field of battle, under opposing standards, the followers of the same Saviour, and commands them to imbrue their hands in each others' blood? Once let Christians of every nation be brought to espouse the cause of peace with one heart and one voice, and their labor will not be in vain in the Lord. Human affairs will rapidly assume a new and milder aspect. The predicted ages of peace will dawn on the world. Public opinion will be purified. The false lustre of the hero will grow dim. A nobler order of character will be admired and diffused. The

kingdoms of the world will gradually become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ.

My friends, I did intend, but I have not time, to notice the arguments which are urged in support of war. Let me only say, that the common argument, that war is necessary to awaken the boldness, energy, and noblest qualities of human nature, will, I hope, receive a practical refutation in the friends of philanthropy and peace. Let it appear in your lives, that you need not this spark from hell to kindle a heroic resolution in your breasts. Let it appear, that a pacific spirit has no affinity with a tame and feeble character. Let us prove, that courage, the virtue which has been thought to flourish most in the rough field of war, may be reared to a more generous height, and to a firmer texture, in the bosom of peace. Let it be seen, that it is not fear, but principle, which has made us the enemies of war. In every enterprise of philanthropy which demands daring, and sacrifice, and exposure to hardship and toil, let us embark with serenity and joy. Be it our part, to exhibit an undaunted, unshaken, unwearied resolution, not in spreading ruin, but in serving God and mankind, in alleviating human misery, in diffusing truth and virtue, and especially in opposing war. The doctrines of Christianity have had many martyrs. Let us be willing, if God shall require it, to be martyrs to its spirit, the neglected, insulted spirit of peace and love. In a better service we cannot live; in a nobler cause we cannot die. It is the cause of Jesus Christ, supported by Almighty Goodness, and appointed to triumph over the passions and delusions of men, the customs of ages, and the fallen monuments of the forgotten conqueror.

NOTE.

I have deferred to this place a few remarks on the arguments which are usually adduced in support of war.

War, it is said, kindles patriotism; by fighting for our country, we learn to love it. But the patriotism which is cherished by war, is ordinarily false and spurious, a vice and not a virtue, a scourge to the world, a narrow, unjust passion, which aims to exalt a particular state on the humiliation and destruction of other nations. A genuine, enlightened patriot discerns, that the welfare of his own country is involved in the general progress of society; and, in the character of a patriot, as well as of a Christian, he rejoices in the liberty and prosperity of other communities, and is anxious to maintain with them the relations of peace and amity.

It is said, that a military spirit is the defence of a country. But it more frequently endangers the vital interests of a nation, by embroiling it with other states. This spirit, like every other passion, is impatient for gratification, and often precipitates a country into unnecessary war. A people have no need of a military spirit. Let them be attached to their government and institutions by habit, by early associations, and especially by experimental conviction of their excellence, and they will never want means or spirit to defend them.

War is recommended as a method of redressing national grievances. But unhappily, the weapons of war, from their very nature, are often wielded most successfully by the unprincipled. Justice and force have little

congeniality. Should not Christians everywhere strive to promote the reference of national as well as of individual disputes to an impartial umpire? Is a project of this nature more extravagant than the idea of reducing savage hordes to a state of regular society? The last has been accomplished. Is the first to be abandoned in despair?

It is said, that war sweeps off the idle, dissolute, and vicious members of the community. Monstrous argument! If a government may for this end plunge a nation into war, it may with equal justice consign to the executioner any number of its subjects, whom it may deem a burden on the state. The fact is, that war commonly generates as many profligates as it destroys. A disbanded army fills the community with at least as many abandoned members as at first it absorbed. There is another method, not quite so summary as war, of ridding a country of unprofitable and injurious citizens, but vastly more effectual; and a method, which will be applied with spirit and success, just in proportion as war shall yield to the light and spirit of Christianity. I refer to the exertions, which Christians have commenced, for the reformation and improvement of the ignorant and poor, and especially for the instruction and moral culture of indigent children. Christians are entreated to persevere and abound in these godlike efforts. By diffusing moral and religious principles and sober and industrious habits through the laboring classes of society, they will dry up one important source of war. They will destroy in a considerable degree the materials of armies. In proportion as these classes become well principled and industrious, poverty will disappear, the population of a country will be more and more proportioned to its resources, and of course the number will be diminished of those, who have no alternative but beggary or a camp. The moral care,

and displayed in the fortitude of the martyr, and in the patient labors of those who have carried the Gospel into the dreary abodes of idolatry. Away then with the argument, that war is needed as a nursery of heroism. The school of the peaceful Redeemer is infinitely more adapted to teach the nobler, as well as the milder virtues, which adorn humanity.

UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY.

DISCOURSE

AT THE

ORDINATION OF THE REV. JARED SPARKS.

BALTIMORE, 1819.

1 THESS. v. 21: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

THE peculiar circumstances of this occasion not only justify, but seem to demand a departure from the course generally followed by preachers at the introduction of a brother into the sacred office. It is usual to speak of the nature, design, duties, and advantages of the Christian ministry; and on these topics I should now be happy to insist, did I not remember that a minister is to be given this day to a religious society, whose peculiarities of opinion have drawn upon them much remark, and may I not add, much reproach. Many good minds, many sincere Christians, I am aware, are apprehensive that the solemnities of this day are to give a degree of influence to principles which they deem false and injurious. The fears and anxieties of such men I respect; and, believing that they are grounded in part on mistake, I have thought it my duty to lay

before you, as clearly as I can, some of the distinguishing opinions of that class of Christians in our country, who are known to sympathize with this religious society. I must ask your patience, for such a subject is not to be despatched in a narrow compass. I must also ask you to remember, that it is impossible to exhibit, in a single discourse, our views of every doctrine of Revelation, much less the differences of opinion which are known to subsist among ourselves. I shall confine myself to topics, on which our sentiments have been misrepresented, or which distinguish us most widely from others. May I not hope to be heard with candor? God deliver us all from prejudice and unkindness, and fill us with the love of truth and virtue.

There are two natural divisions under which my thoughts will be arranged. I shall endeavour to unfold, 1st, The principles which we adopt in interpreting the Scriptures. And 2dly, Some of the doctrines, which the Scriptures, so interpreted, seem to us clearly to express.

I. We regard the Scriptures as the records of God's successive revelations to mankind, and particularly of the last and most perfect revelation of his will by Jesus Christ. Whatever doctrines seem to us to be clearly taught in the Scriptures, we receive without reserve or exception. We do not, however, attach equal importance to all the books in this collection. Our religion, we believe, lies chiefly in the New Testament. The dispensation of Moses, compared with that of Jesus, we consider as adapted to the childhood of the human race, a preparation for a nobler system, and chiefly useful now as serving to confirm and illustrate the

Christian Scriptures. Jesus Christ is the only master of Christians, and whatever he taught, either during his personal ministry, or by his inspired Apostles, we regard as of divine authority, and profess to make the rule of our lives.

This authority, which we give to the Scriptures, is a reason, we conceive, for studying them with peculiar care, and for inquiring anxiously into the principles of interpretation, by which their true meaning may be ascertained. The principles adopted by the class of Christians in whose name I speak, need to be explained, because they are often misunderstood. We are particularly accused of making an unwarrantable use of reason in the interpretation of Scripture. We are said to exalt reason above revelation, to prefer our own wisdom to God's. Loose and undefined charges of this kind are circulated so freely, that we think it due to ourselves, and to the cause of truth, to express our views with some particularity.

Our leading principle in interpreting Scripture is this, that the Bible is a book written for men, in the language of men, and that its meaning is to be sought in the same manner as that of other books. We believe that God, when he speaks to the human race, conforms, if we may so say, to the established rules of speaking and writing. How else would the Scriptures avail us more, than if communicated in an unknown tongue?

Now all books, and all conversation, require in the reader or hearer the constant exercise of reason; or their true import is only to be obtained by continual comparison and inference. Human language, you well know, admits various interpretations; and every word

and every sentence must be modified and explained according to the subject which is discussed, according to the purposes, feelings, circumstances, and principles of the writer, and according to the genius and idioms of the language which he uses. These are acknowledged principles in the interpretation of human writings; and a man, whose words we should explain without reference to these principles, would reproach us justly with a criminal want of candor, and an intention of obscuring or distorting his meaning.

Were the Bible written in a language and style of its own, did it consist of words, which admit but a single sense, and of sentences wholly detached from each other, there would be no place for the principles now laid down. We could not reason about it, as about other writings. But such a book would be of little worth; and perhaps, of all books, the Scriptures correspond least to this description. The Word of God bears the stamp of the same hand, which we see in his works. It has infinite connexions and dependences. Every proposition is linked with others, and is to be compared with others; that its full and precise import may be understood. Nothing stands alone. The New Testament is built on the Old. The Christian dispensation is a continuation of the Jewish, the completion of a vast scheme of providence, requiring great extent of view in the reader. Still more, the Bible treats of subjects on which we receive ideas from other sources besides itself; such subjects as the nature, passions, relations, and duties of man; and it expects us to restrain and modify its language by the known truths, which observation and experience furnish on these topics.

We profess not to know a book, which demands a

more frequent exercise of reason than the Bible. In addition to the remarks now made on its infinite connexions, we may observe, that its style nowhere affects the precision of science, or the accuracy of definition. Its language is singularly glowing, bold, and figurative, demanding more frequent departures from the literal sense, than that of our own age and country, and consequently demanding more continual exercise of judgment. — We find, too, that the different portions of this book, instead of being confined to general truths, refer perpetually to the times when they were written, to states of society, to modes of thinking, to controversies in the church, to feelings and usages which have passed away, and without the knowledge of which we are constantly in danger of extending to all times, and places, what was of temporary and local application. — We find, too, that some of these books are strongly marked by the genius and character of their respective writers, that the Holy Spirit did not so guide the Apostles as to suspend the peculiarities of their minds, and that a knowledge of their feelings, and of the influences under which they were placed, is one of the preparations for understanding their writings. With these views of the Bible, we feel it our bounden duty to exercise our reason upon it perpetually, to compare, to infer, to look beyond the letter to the spirit, to seek in the nature of the subject, and the aim of the writer, his true meaning; and, in general, to make use of what is known, for explaining what is difficult, and for discovering new truths.

Need I descend to particulars, to prove that the Scriptures demand the exercise of reason? Take, for example, the style in which they generally speak of

God, and observe how habitually they apply to him human passions and organs. Recollect the declarations of Christ, that he came not to send peace, but a sword; that unless we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we have no life in us; that we must hate father and mother, and pluck out the right eye; and a vast number of passages equally bold and unlimited. Recollect the unqualified manner in which it is said of Christians, that they possess all things, know all things, and can do all things. Recollect the verbal contradiction between Paul and James, and the apparent clashing of some parts of Paul's writings with the general doctrines and end of Christianity. I might extend the enumeration indefinitely; and who does not see, that we must limit all these passages by the known attributes of God, of Jesus Christ, and of human nature, and by the circumstances under which they were written, so as to give the language a quite different import from what it would require, had it been applied to different beings, or used in different connexions.

Enough has been said to show, in what sense we make use of reason in interpreting Scripture. From a variety of possible interpretations, we select that which accords with the nature of the subject and the state of the writer, with the connexion of the passage, with the general strain of Scripture, with the known character and will of God, and with the obvious and acknowledged laws of nature. In other words, we believe that God never contradicts, in one part of Scripture, what he teaches in another; and never contradicts, in revelation, what he teaches in his works and providence. And we therefore distrust every interpretation, which, after deliberate attention, seems repugnant to any estab-

lished truth. We reason about the Bible precisely as civilians do about the constitution under which we live; who, you know, are accustomed to limit one provision of that venerable instrument by others, and to fix the precise import of its parts, by inquiring into its general spirit, into the intentions of its authors, and into the prevalent feelings, impressions, and circumstances of the time when it was framed. Without these principles of interpretation, we frankly acknowledge, that we cannot defend the divine authority of the Scriptures. Deny us this latitude, and we must abandon this book to its enemies.

We do not announce these principles as original, or peculiar to ourselves. All Christians occasionally adopt them, not excepting those who most vehemently decry them, when they happen to menace some favorite article of their creed. All Christians are compelled to use them in their controversies with infidels. All sects employ them in their warfare with one another. All willingly avail themselves of reason, when it can be pressed into the service of their own party, and only complain of it, when its weapons wound themselves. None reason more frequently than those from whom we differ. It is astonishing what a fabric they rear from a few slight hints about the fall of our first parents; and how ingeniously they extract, from detached passages, mysterious doctrines about the divine nature. We do not blame them for reasoning so abundantly, but for violating the fundamental rules of reasoning, for sacrificing the plain to the obscure, and the general strain of Scripture to a scanty number of insulated texts.

We object strongly to the contemptuous manner in which human reason is often spoken of by our adver-

saries, because it leads, we believe, to universal skepticism. If reason be so dreadfully darkened by the fall, that its most decisive judgments on religion are unworthy of trust, then Christianity, and even natural theology, must be abandoned; for the existence and veracity of God, and the divine original of Christianity, are conclusions of reason, and must stand or fall with it. If revelation be at war with this faculty, it subverts itself, for the great question of its truth is left by God to be decided at the bar of reason. It is worthy of remark, how nearly the bigot and the skeptic approach. Both would annihilate our confidence in our faculties, and both throw doubt and confusion over every truth. We honor revelation too highly to make it the antagonist of reason, or to believe that it calls us to renounce our highest powers.

We indeed grant, that the use of reason in religion is accompanied with danger. But we ask any honest man to look back on the history of the church, and say, whether the renunciation of it be not still more dangerous. Besides, it is a plain fact, that men reason as erroneously on all subjects, as on religion. Who does not know the wild and groundless theories, which have been framed in physical and political science? But who ever supposed, that we must cease to exercise reason on nature and society, because men have erred for ages in explaining them? We grant, that the passions continually, and sometimes fatally, disturb the rational faculty in its inquiries into revelation. The ambitious contrive to find doctrines in the Bible, which favor their love of dominion. The timid and dejected discover there a gloomy system, and the mystical and fanatical, a visionary theology. The vicious can find examples or

assertions on which to build the hope of a late repentance, or of acceptance on easy terms. The falsely refined contrive to light on doctrines which have not been soiled by vulgar handling. But the passions do not distract the reason in religious, any more than in other inquiries, which excite strong and general interest; and this faculty, of consequence, is not to be renounced in religion, unless we are prepared to discard it universally. The true inference from the almost endless errors, which have darkened theology, is, not that we are to neglect and disparage our powers, but to exert them more patiently, circumspectly, uprightly. The worst errors, after all, having sprung up in that church, which proscribes reason, and demands from its members implicit faith. The most pernicious doctrines have been the growth of the darkest times, when the general credulity encouraged bad men and enthusiasts to broach their dreams and inventions, and to stifle the faint remonstrances of reason, by the menaces of everlasting perdition. Say what we may, God has given us a rational nature, and will call us to account for it. We may let it sleep, but we do so at our peril. Revelation is addressed to us as rational beings. We may wish, in our sloth, that God had given us a system, demanding no labor of comparing, limiting, and inferring. But such a system would be at variance with the whole character of our present existence; and it is the part of wisdom to take revelation as it is given to us, and to interpret it by the help of the faculties, which it everywhere supposes, and on which it is founded.

To the views now given, an objection is commonly urged from the character of God. We are told, that God being infinitely wiser than men, his discoveries

will surpass human reason. In a revelation from such a teacher, we ought to expect propositions, which we cannot reconcile with one another, and which may seem to contradict established truths; and it becomes us not to question or explain them away, but to believe, and adore, and to submit our weak and carnal reason to the Divine Word. To this objection, we have two short answers. We say, first, that it is impossible that a teacher of infinite wisdom should expose those, whom he would teach, to infinite error. But if once we admit, that propositions, which in their literal sense appear plainly repugnant to one another, or to any known truth, are still to be literally understood and received, what possible limit can we set to the belief of contradictions? What shelter have we from the wildest fanaticism, which can always quote passages, that, in their literal and obvious sense, give support to its extravagances? How can the Protestant escape from transubstantiation, a doctrine most clearly taught us, if the submission of reason, now contended for, be a duty? How can we even hold fast the truth of revelation, for if one apparent contradiction may be true, so may another, and the proposition, that Christianity is false, though involving inconsistency, may still be a verity?

We answer again, that, if God be infinitely wise, he cannot sport with the understandings of his creatures. A wise teacher discovers his wisdom in adapting himself to the capacities of his pupils, not in perplexing them with what is unintelligible, not in distressing them with apparent contradictions, not in filling them with a skeptical distrust of their own powers. An infinitely wise teacher, who knows the precise extent of our minds, and the best method of enlightening them, will surpass

all other instructors in bringing down truth to our apprehension, and in showing its loveliness and harmony. We ought, indeed, to expect occasional obscurity in such a book as the Bible, which was written for past and future ages, as well as for the present. But God's wisdom is a pledge, that whatever is necessary for *us*, and necessary for salvation, is revealed too plainly to be mistaken, and too consistently to be questioned, by a sound and upright mind. It is not the mark of wisdom, to use an unintelligible phraseology, to communicate what is above our capacities, to confuse and unsettle the intellect by appearances of contradiction. We honor our Heavenly Teacher too much to ascribe to him such a revelation. A revelation is a gift of light. It cannot thicken our darkness, and multiply our perplexities.

II. Having thus stated the principles according to which we interpret Scripture, I now proceed to the second great head of this discourse, which is, to state some of the views which we derive from that sacred book, particularly those which distinguish us from other Christians.

1. In the first place, we believe in the doctrine of God's UNITY, or that there is one God, and one only. To this truth we give infinite importance, and we feel ourselves bound to take heed, lest any man spoil us of it by vain philosophy. The proposition, that there is one God, seems to us exceedingly plain. We understand by it, that there is one being, one mind, one person, one intelligent agent, and one only, to whom underived and infinite perfection and dominion belong. We conceive, that these words could have conveyed no

other meaning to the simple and uncultivated people, who were set apart to be the depositaries of this great truth, and who were utterly incapable of understanding those hair-breadth distinctions between being and person, which the sagacity of later ages has discovered. We find no intimation, that this language was to be taken in an unusual sense, or that God's unity was a quite different thing from the oneness of other intelligent beings.

We object to the doctrine of the Trinity, that, whilst acknowledging in words, it subverts in effect, the unity of God. According to this doctrine, there are three infinite and equal persons, possessing supreme divinity, called the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Each of these persons, as described by theologians, has his own particular consciousness, will, and perceptions. They love each other, converse with each other, and delight in each other's society. They perform different parts in man's redemption, each having his appropriate office, and neither doing the work of the other. The Son is mediator and not the Father. The Father sends the Son, and is not himself sent; nor is he conscious, like the Son, of taking flesh. Here, then, we have three intelligent agents, possessed of different consciousnesses, different wills, and different perceptions, performing different acts, and sustaining different relations; and if these things do not imply and constitute three minds or beings, we are utterly at a loss to know how three minds or beings are to be formed. It is difference of properties, and acts, and consciousness, which leads us to the belief of different intelligent beings, and, if this mark fails us, our whole knowledge falls; we have no proof, that all the agents and persons in the universe

are not one and the same mind. When we attempt to conceive of three Gods, we can do nothing more than represent to ourselves three agents, distinguished from each other by similar marks and peculiarities to those which separate the persons of the Trinity; and when common Christians hear these persons spoken of as conversing with each other, loving each other, and performing different acts, how can they help regarding them as different beings, different minds?

We do, then, with all earnestness, though without reproaching our brethren, protest against the irrational and unscriptural doctrine of the Trinity. "To us," as to the Apostle and the primitive Christians, "there is one God, even the Father." With Jesus, we worship the Father, as the only living and true God. We are astonished, that any man can read the New Testament, and avoid the conviction, that the Father alone is God. We hear our Saviour continually appropriating this character to the Father. We find the Father continually distinguished from Jesus by this title. "God sent his Son." "God anointed Jesus." Now, how singular and inexplicable is this phraseology, which fills the New Testament, if this title belong equally to Jesus, and if a principal object of this book is to reveal him as God, as partaking equally with the Father in supreme divinity! We challenge our opponents to adduce one passage in the New Testament, where the word God means three persons, where it is not limited to one person, and where, unless turned from its usual sense by the connexion, it does not mean the Father. Can stronger proof be given, that the doctrine of three persons in the Godhead is not a fundamental doctrine of Christianity?

This doctrine, were it true, must, from its difficulty, singularity, and importance, have been laid down with great clearness, guarded with great care, and stated with all possible precision. But where does this statement appear? From the many passages which treat of God, we ask for one, one only, in which we are told, that he is a threefold being, or that he is three persons, or that he is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. On the contrary, in the New Testament, where, at least, we might expect many express assertions of this nature, God is declared to be one, without the least attempt to prevent the acceptation of the words in their common sense; and he is always spoken of and addressed in the singular number, that is, in language which was universally understood to intend a single person, and to which no other idea could have been attached, without an express admonition. So entirely do the Scriptures abstain from stating the Trinity, that when our opponents would insert it into their creeds and doxologies, they are compelled to leave the Bible, and to invent forms of words altogether unsanctioned by Scriptural phraseology. That a doctrine so strange, so liable to misapprehension, so fundamental as this is said to be, and requiring such careful exposition, should be left so undefined and unprotected, to be made out by inference, and to be hunted through distant and detached parts of Scripture, this is a difficulty, which, we think, no ingenuity can explain.

We have another difficulty. Christianity, it must be remembered, was planted and grew up amidst sharp-sighted enemies, who overlooked no objectionable part of the system, and who must have fastened with great earnestness on a doctrine involving such apparent contradictions as the Trinity. We cannot conceive an

opinion, against which the Jews, who prided themselves on an adherence to God's unity, would have raised an equal clamor. Now, how happens it, that in the apostolic writings, which relate so much to objections against Christianity, and to the controversies which grew out of this religion, not one word is said, implying that objections were brought against the Gospel from the doctrine of the Trinity, not one word is uttered in its defence and explanation, not a word to rescue it from reproach and mistake? This argument has almost the force of demonstration. We are persuaded, that had three divine persons been announced by the first preachers of Christianity, all equal, and all infinite, one of whom was the very Jesus who had lately died on a cross, this peculiarity of Christianity would have almost absorbed every other, and the great labor of the Apostles would have been to repel the continual assaults, which it would have awakened. But the fact is, that not a whisper of objection to Christianity, on that account, reaches our ears from the apostolic age. In the Epistles we see not a trace of controversy called forth by the Trinity.

We have further objections to this doctrine, drawn from its practical influence. We regard it as unfavorable to devotion, by dividing and distracting the mind in its communion with God. It is a great excellence of the doctrine of God's unity, that it offers to us ONE OBJECT of supreme homage, adoration, and love, One Infinite Father, one Being of beings, one original and fountain, to whom we may refer all good, in whom all our powers and affections may be concentrated, and whose lovely and venerable nature may pervade all our thoughts. True piety, when directed to an undivided

Deity, has a chasteness, a singleness, most favorable to religious awe and love. Now, the Trinity sets before us three distinct objects of supreme adoration; three infinite persons, having equal claims on our hearts; three divine agents, performing different offices, and to be acknowledged and worshipped in different relations. And is it possible, we ask, that the weak and limited mind of man can attach itself to these with the same power and joy, as to One Infinite Father, the only First Cause, in whom all the blessings of nature and redemption meet as their centre and source? Must not devotion be distracted by the equal and rival claims of three equal persons, and must not the worship of the conscientious, consistent Christian, be disturbed by an apprehension, lest he withhold from one or another of these, his due proportion of homage?

We also think, that the doctrine of the Trinity injures devotion, not only by joining to the Father other objects of worship, but by taking from the Father the supreme affection, which is his due, and transferring it to the Son. This is a most important view. That Jesus Christ, if exalted into the infinite Divinity, should be more interesting than the Father, is precisely what might be expected from history, and from the principles of human nature. Men want an object of worship like themselves, and the great secret of idolatry lies in this propensity. A God, clothed in our form, and feeling our wants and sorrows, speaks to our weak nature more strongly, than a Father in heaven, a pure spirit, invisible and unapproachable, save by the reflecting and purified mind. — We think, too, that the peculiar offices ascribed to Jesus by the popular theology, make him the most attractive person in the Godhead. The Fa-

ther is the depositary of the justice, the vindicator of the rights, the avenger of the laws of the Divinity. On the other hand, the Son, the brightness of the divine mercy, stands between the incensed Deity and guilty humanity, exposes his meek head to the storms, and his compassionate breast to the sword of the divine justice, bears our whole load of punishment, and purchases with his blood every blessing which descends from heaven. Need we state the effect of these representations, especially on common minds, for whom Christianity was chiefly designed, and whom it seeks to bring to the Father as the loveliest being? We do believe, that the worship of a bleeding, suffering God, tends strongly to absorb the mind, and to draw it from other objects, just as the human tenderness of the Virgin Mary has given her so conspicuous a place in the devotions of the Church of Rome. We believe, too, that this worship, though attractive, is not most fitted to spiritualize the mind, that it awakens human transport, rather than that deep veneration of the moral perfections of God, which is the essence of piety.

2. Having thus given our views of the unity of God, I proceed in the second place to observe, that we believe in the unity of Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus is one mind, one soul, one being, as truly one as we are, and equally distinct from the one God. We complain of the doctrine of the Trinity, that, not satisfied with making God three beings, it makes Jesus Christ two beings, and thus introduces infinite confusion into our conceptions of his character. This corruption of Christianity, alike repugnant to common sense and to the general strain of Scripture, is a remarkable proof of the power of a false philosophy in disfiguring the simple truth of Jesus.

According to this doctrine, Jesus Christ, instead of being one mind, one conscious intelligent principle, whom we can understand, consists of two souls, two minds; the one divine, the other human; the one weak, the other almighty; the one ignorant, the other omniscient. Now we maintain, that this is to make Christ two beings. To denominate him one person, one being, and yet to suppose him made up of two minds, infinitely different from each other, is to abuse and confound language, and to throw darkness over all our conceptions of intelligent natures. According to the common doctrine, each of these two minds in Christ has its own consciousness, its own will, its own perceptions. They have, in fact, no common properties. The divine mind feels none of the wants and sorrows of the human, and the human is infinitely removed from the perfection and happiness of the divine. Can you conceive of two beings in the universe more distinct? We have always thought that one person was constituted and distinguished by one consciousness. The doctrine, that one and the same person should have two consciousnesses, two wills, two souls, infinitely different from each other, this we think an enormous tax on human credulity.

We say, that if a doctrine, so strange, so difficult, so remote from all the previous conceptions of men, be indeed a part and an essential part of revelation, it must be taught with great distinctness, and we ask our brethren to point to some plain, direct passage, where Christ is said to be composed of two minds infinitely different, yet constituting one person. We find none. Other Christians, indeed, tell us, that this doctrine is necessary to the harmony of the Scriptures, that some texts ascribe to Jesus Christ human, and others divine proper-

ties, and that to reconcile these, we must suppose two minds, to which these properties may be referred. In other words, for the purpose of reconciling certain difficult passages, which a just criticism can in a great degree, if not wholly, explain, we must invent an hypothesis vastly more difficult, and involving gross absurdity. We are to find our way out of a labyrinth, by a clue which conducts us into mazes infinitely more inextricable.

Surely, if Jesus Christ felt that he consisted of two minds, and that this was a leading feature of his religion, his phraseology respecting himself would have been colored by this peculiarity. The universal language of men is framed upon the idea, that one person is one person, is one mind, and one soul; and when the multitude heard this language from the lips of Jesus, they must have taken it in its usual sense, and must have referred to a single soul all which he spoke, unless expressly instructed to interpret it differently. But where do we find this instruction? Where do you meet, in the New Testament, the phraseology which abounds in Trinitarian books, and which necessarily grows from the doctrine of two natures in Jesus? Where does this divine teacher say, "This I speak as God, and this as man; this is true only of my human mind, this only of my divine"? Where do we find in the Epistles a trace of this strange phraseology? Nowhere. It was not needed in that day. It was demanded by the errors of a later age.

We believe, then, that Christ is one mind, one being, and, I add, a being distinct from the one God. That Christ is not the one God, not the same being with the Father, is a necessary inference from our former head,

in which we saw that the doctrine of three persons in God is a fiction. But on so important a subject, I would add a few remarks. We wish, that those from whom we differ, would weigh one striking fact. Jesus, in his preaching, continually spoke of God. The word was always in his mouth. We ask, does he, by this word, ever mean himself? We say, never. On the contrary, he most plainly distinguishes between God and himself, and so do his disciples. How this is to be reconciled with the idea, that the manifestation of Christ, as God, was a primary object of Christianity, our adversaries must determine.

If we examine the passages in which Jesus is distinguished from God, we shall see, that they not only speak of him as another being, but seem to labor to express his inferiority. He is continually spoken of as the Son of God, sent of God, receiving all his powers from God, working miracles because God was with him, judging justly because God taught him, having claims on our belief, because he was anointed and sealed by God, and as able of himself to do nothing. The New Testament is filled with this language. Now we ask, what impression this language was fitted and intended to make? Could any, who heard it, have imagined that Jesus was the very God to whom he was so industriously declared to be inferior; the very Being by whom he was sent, and from whom he professed to have received his message and power? Let it here be remembered, that the human birth, and bodily form, and humble circumstances, and mortal sufferings of Jesus, must all have prepared men to interpret, in the most unqualified manner, the language in which his inferiority to God was declared. Why, then, was this language used so continually, and

without limitation, if Jesus were the Supreme Deity, and if this truth were an essential part of his religion? I repeat it, the human condition and sufferings of Christ tended strongly to exclude from men's minds the idea of his proper Godhead; and, of course, we should expect to find in the New Testament perpetual care and effort to counteract this tendency, to hold him forth as the same being with his Father, if this doctrine were, as is pretended, the soul and centre of his religion. We should expect to find the phraseology of Scripture cast into the mould of this doctrine, to hear familiarly of God the Son, of our Lord God Jesus, and to be told, that to us there is one God, even Jesus. But, instead of this, the inferiority of Christ pervades the New Testament. It is not only implied in the general phraseology, but repeatedly and decidedly expressed, and unaccompanied with any admonition to prevent its application to his whole nature. Could it, then, have been the great design of the sacred writers to exhibit Jesus as the Supreme God?

I am aware that these remarks will be met by two or three texts, in which Christ is called God, and by a class of passages, not very numerous, in which divine properties are said to be ascribed to him. To these we offer one plain answer. We say, that it is one of the most established and obvious principles of criticism, that language is to be explained according to the known properties of the subject to which it is applied. Every man knows, that the same words convey very different ideas, when used in relation to different beings. Thus, Solomon *built* the temple in a different manner from the architect whom he employed; and God *repents* differently from man. Now we maintain, that the known

properties and circumstances of Christ, his birth, sufferings, and death, his constant habit of speaking of God as a distinct being from himself, his praying to God, his ascribing to God all his power and offices, these acknowledged properties of Christ, we say, oblige us to interpret the comparatively few passages which are thought to make him the Supreme God, in a manner consistent with his distinct and inferior nature. It is our duty to explain such texts by the rule which we apply to other texts, in which human beings are called gods, and are said to be partakers of the divine nature, to know and possess all things, and to be filled with all God's fulness. These latter passages we do not hesitate to modify, and restrain, and turn from the most obvious sense, because this sense is opposed to the known properties of the beings to whom they relate; and we maintain, that we adhere to the same principle, and use no greater latitude, in explaining, as we do, the passages which are thought to support the Godhead of Christ.

Trinitarians profess to derive some important advantages from their mode of viewing Christ. It furnishes them, they tell us, with an infinite atonement, for it shows them an infinite being suffering for their sins. The confidence with which this fallacy is repeated astonishes us. When pressed with the question, whether they really believe, that the infinite and unchangeable God suffered and died on the cross, they acknowledge that this is not true, but that Christ's human mind alone sustained the pains of death. How have we, then, an infinite sufferer? This language seems to us an imposition on common minds, and very derogatory to God's justice, as if this attribute could be satisfied by a sophism and a fiction.

We are also told, that Christ is a more interesting object, that his love and mercy are more felt, when he is viewed as the Supreme God, who left his glory to take humanity and to suffer for men. That Trinitarians are strongly moved by this representation, we do not mean to deny; but we think their emotions altogether founded on a misapprehension of their own doctrines. They talk of the second person of the Trinity's leaving his glory and his Father's bosom, to visit and save the world. But this second person, being the unchangeable and infinite God, was evidently incapable of parting with the least degree of his perfection and felicity. At the moment of his taking flesh, he was as intimately present with his Father as before, and equally with his Father filled heaven, and earth, and immensity. This Trinitarians acknowledge; and still they profess to be touched and overwhelmed by the amazing humiliation of this immutable being! But not only does their doctrine, when fully explained, reduce Christ's humiliation to a fiction, it almost wholly destroys the impressions with which his cross ought to be viewed. According to their doctrine, Christ was comparatively no sufferer at all. It is true, his human mind suffered; but this, they tell us, was an infinitely small part of Jesus, bearing no more proportion to his whole nature, than a single hair of our heads to the whole body, or than a drop to the ocean. The divine mind of Christ, that which was most properly himself, was infinitely happy, at the very moment of the suffering of his humanity. Whilst hanging on the cross, he was the happiest being in the universe, as happy as the infinite Father; so that his pains, compared with his felicity, were nothing. This Trinitarians do, and must, acknowledge. It fol-

lows necessarily from the immutableness of the divine nature, which they ascribe to Christ; so that their system, justly viewed, robs his death of interest, weakens our sympathy with his sufferings, and is, of all others, most unfavorable to a love of Christ, founded on a sense of his sacrifices for mankind. We esteem our own views to be vastly more affecting. It is our belief, that Christ's humiliation was real and entire, that the whole Saviour, and not a part of him, suffered, that his crucifixion was a scene of deep and unmixed agony. As we stand round his cross, our minds are not distracted, nor our sensibility weakened, by contemplating him as composed of incongruous and infinitely differing minds, and as having a balance of infinite felicity. We recognise in the dying Jesus but one mind. This, we think, renders his sufferings, and his patience and love in bearing them, incomparably more impressive and affecting than the system we oppose.

3. Having thus given our belief on two great points, namely, that there is one God, and that Jesus Christ is a being distinct from, and inferior to, God, I now proceed to another point, on which we lay still greater stress. We believe in the *moral perfection of God*. We consider no part of theology so important as that which treats of God's moral character; and we value our views of Christianity chiefly as they assert his amiable and venerable attributes.

It may be said, that, in regard to this subject, all Christians agree, that all ascribe to the Supreme Being infinite justice, goodness, and holiness. We reply, that it is very possible to speak of God magnificently, and to think of him meanly; to apply to his person high-sounding epithets, and to his government, principles

which make him odious. The Heathens called Jupiter the greatest and the best; but his history was black with cruelty and lust. We cannot judge of men's real ideas of God by their general language, for in all ages they have hoped to soothe the Deity by adulation. We must inquire into their particular views of his purposes, of the principles of his administration, and of his disposition towards his creatures.

We conceive that Christians have generally leaned towards a very injurious view of the Supreme Being. They have too often felt, as if he were raised, by his greatness and sovereignty, above the principles of morality, above those eternal laws of equity and rectitude, to which all other beings are subjected. We believe, that in no being is the sense of right so strong, so omnipotent, as in God. We believe that his almighty power is entirely submitted to his perceptions of rectitude; and this is the ground of our piety. It is not because he is our Creator merely, but because he created us for good and holy purposes; it is not because his will is irresistible, but because his will is the perfection of virtue, that we pay him allegiance. We cannot bow before a being, however great and powerful, who governs tyrannically. We respect nothing but excellence, whether on earth or in heaven. We venerate not the loftiness of God's throne, but the equity and goodness in which it is established.

We believe that God is infinitely good, kind, benevolent, in the proper sense of these words; good in disposition, as well as in act; good, not to a few, but to all; good to every individual, as well as to the general system.

We believe, too, that God is just; but we never

forget, that his justice is the justice of a good being, dwelling in the same mind, and acting in harmony, with perfect benevolence. By this attribute, we understand God's infinite regard to virtue or moral worth, expressed in a moral government; that is, in giving excellent and equitable laws, and in conferring such rewards, and inflicting such punishments, as are best fitted to secure their observance. God's justice has for its end the highest virtue of the creation, and it punishes for this end alone, and thus it coincides with benevolence; for virtue and happiness, though not the same, are inseparably conjoined.

God's justice thus viewed, appears to us to be in perfect harmony with his mercy. According to the prevalent systems of theology, these attributes are so discordant and jarring, that to reconcile them is the hardest task, and the most wonderful achievement, of infinite wisdom. To us they seem to be intimate friends, always at peace, breathing the same spirit, and seeking the same end. By God's mercy, we understand not a blind instinctive compassion, which forgives without reflection, and without regard to the interests of virtue. This, we acknowledge, would be incompatible with justice, and also with enlightened benevolence. God's mercy, as we understand it, desires strongly the happiness of the guilty, but only through their penitence. It has a regard to character as truly as his justice. It defers punishment, and suffers long, that the sinner may return to his duty, but leaves the impenitent and unyielding, to the fearful retribution threatened in God's Word.

To give our views of God in one word, we believe in his Parental character. We ascribe to him, not only

the name, but the dispositions and principles of a father. We believe that he has a father's concern for his creatures, a father's desire for their improvement, a father's equity in proportioning his commands to their powers, a father's joy in their progress, a father's readiness to receive the penitent, and a father's justice for the incorrigible. We look upon this world as a place of education, in which he is training men by prosperity and adversity, by aids and obstructions, by conflicts of reason and passion, by motives to duty and temptations to sin, by a various discipline suited to free and moral beings, for union with himself, and for a sublime and ever-growing virtue in heaven.

Now, we object to the systems of religion, which prevail among us, that they are adverse, in a greater or less degree, to these purifying, comforting, and honorable views of God; that they take from us our Father in heaven, and substitute for him a being, whom we cannot love if we would, and whom we ought not to love if we could. We object, particularly on this ground, to that system, which arrogates to itself the name of Orthodoxy, and which is now industriously propagated through our country. This system indeed takes various shapes, but in all it casts dishonor on the Creator. According to its old and genuine form, it teaches, that God brings us into life wholly depraved, so that under the innocent features of our childhood is hidden a nature averse to all good and propense to all evil, a nature which exposes us to God's displeasure and wrath, even before we have acquired power to understand our duties, or to reflect upon our actions. According to a more modern exposition, it teaches, that we came from the hands of our Maker with such a constitution, and are

placed under such influences and circumstances, as to render certain and infallible the total depravity of every human being, from the first moment of his moral agency; and it also teaches, that the offence of the child, who brings into life this ceaseless tendency to unmingled crime, exposes him to the sentence of everlasting damnation. Now, according to the plainest principles of morality, we maintain, that a natural constitution of the mind, unfailingly disposing it to evil and to evil alone, would absolve it from guilt; that to give existence under this condition would argue unspeakable cruelty; and that to punish the sin of this unhappily constituted child with endless ruin, would be a wrong unparalleled by the most merciless despotism.

This system also teaches, that God selects from this corrupt mass a number to be saved, and plucks them, by a special influence, from the common ruin; that the rest of mankind, though left without that special grace which their conversion requires, are commanded to repent, under penalty of aggravated woe; and that forgiveness is promised them, on terms which their very constitution infallibly disposes them to reject, and in rejecting which they awfully enhance the punishments of hell. These proffers of forgiveness and exhortations of amendment, to beings born under a blighting curse, fill our minds with a horror which we want words to express.

That this religious system does not produce all the effects on character, which might be anticipated, we most joyfully admit. It is often, very often, counteracted by nature, conscience, common sense, by the general strain of Scripture, by the mild example and precepts of Christ, and by the many positive declara-

tions of God's universal kindness and perfect equity. But still we think that we see its unhappy influence. It tends to discourage the timid, to give excuses to the bad, to feed the vanity of the fanatical, and to offer shelter to the bad feelings of the malignant. By shocking, as it does, the fundamental principles of morality, and by exhibiting a severe and partial Deity, it tends strongly to pervert the moral faculty, to form a gloomy, forbidding, and servile religion, and to lead men to substitute censoriousness, bitterness, and persecution, for a tender and impartial charity. We think, too, that this system, which begins with degrading human nature, may by expected to end in pride; for pride grows out of a consciousness of high distinctions, however obtained, and no distinction is so great as that which is made between the elected and abandoned of God.

The false and dishonorable views of God, which have now been stated, we feel ourselves bound to resist unceasingly. Other errors we can pass over with comparative indifference. But we ask our opponents to leave to us a God, worthy of our love and trust, in whom our moral sentiments may delight, in whom our weaknesses and sorrows may find refuge. We cling to the Divine perfections. We meet them everywhere in creation, we read them in the Scriptures, we see a lovely image of them in Jesus Christ; and gratitude, love, and veneration call on us to assert them. Reproached, as we often are, by men, it is our consolation and happiness, that one of our chief offences is the zeal with which we vindicate the dishonored goodness and rectitude of God.

4. Having thus spoken of the unity of God; of the unity of Jesus, and his inferiority to God; and of the

perfections of the Divine character; I now proceed to give our views of the mediation of Christ, and of the purposes of his mission. With regard to the great object which Jesus came to accomplish, there seems to be no possibility of mistake. We believe, that he was sent by the Father to effect a moral, or spiritual deliverance of mankind; that is, to rescue men from sin and its consequences, and to bring them to a state of everlasting purity and happiness. We believe, too, that he accomplishes this sublime purpose by a variety of methods; by his instructions respecting God's unity, parental character, and moral government, which are admirably fitted to reclaim the world from idolatry and impiety, to the knowledge, love, and obedience of the Creator; by his promises of pardon to the penitent, and of divine assistance to those who labor for progress in moral excellence; by the light which he has thrown on the path of duty; by his own spotless example, in which the loveliness and sublimity of virtue shine forth to warm and quicken, as well as guide us to perfection; by his threatenings against incorrigible guilt; by his glorious discoveries of immortality; by his sufferings and death; by that signal event, the resurrection, which powerfully bore witness to his divine mission, and brought down to men's senses a future life; by his continual intercession, which obtains for us spiritual aid and blessings; and by the power with which he is invested of raising the dead, judging the world, and conferring the everlasting rewards promised to the faithful.

We have no desire to conceal the fact, that a difference of opinion exists among us, in regard to an interesting part of Christ's mediation; I mean, in regard to the precise influence of his death on our forgiveness.

Many suppose, that this event contributes to our pardon, as it was a principal means of confirming his religion, and of giving it a power over the mind; in other words, that it procures forgiveness by leading to that repentance and virtue, which is the great and only condition on which forgiveness is bestowed. Many of us are dissatisfied with this explanation, and think that the Scriptures ascribe the remission of sins to Christ's death, with an emphasis so peculiar, that we ought to consider this event as having a special influence in removing punishment, though the Scriptures may not reveal the way in which it contributes to this end.

Whilst, however, we differ in explaining the connexion between Christ's death and human forgiveness, a connexion which we all gratefully acknowledge, we agree in rejecting many sentiments which prevail in regard to his mediation. The idea, which is conveyed to common minds by the popular system, that Christ's death has an influence in making God placable, or merciful, in awakening his kindness towards men, we reject with strong disapprobation. We are happy to find, that this very dishonorable notion is disowned by intelligent Christians of that class from which we differ. We recollect, however, that, not long ago, it was common to hear of Christ, as having died to appease God's wrath, and to pay the debt of sinners to his inflexible justice; and we have a strong persuasion, that the language of popular religious books, and the common mode of stating the doctrine of Christ's mediation, still communicate very degrading views of God's character. They give to multitudes the impression, that the death of Jesus produces a change in the mind of God towards man, and that in this its efficacy chiefly consists.

No error seems to us more pernicious. We can endure no shade over the pure goodness of God. We earnestly maintain, that Jesus, instead of calling forth, in any way or degree, the mercy of the Father, was sent by that mercy, to be our Saviour; that he is nothing to the human race, but what he is by God's appointment; that he communicates nothing but what God empowers him to bestow; that our Father in heaven is originally, essentially, and eternally placable, and disposed to forgive; and that his unborrowed, underived, and unchangeable love is the only fountain of what flows to us through his Son. We conceive, that Jesus is dishonored, not glorified, by ascribing to him an influence, which clouds the splendor of Divine benevolence.

We farther agree in rejecting, as unscriptural and absurd, the explanation given by the popular system, of the manner in which Christ's death procures forgiveness for men. This system used to teach as its fundamental principle, that man, having sinned against an infinite Being, has contracted infinite guilt, and is consequently exposed to an infinite penalty. We believe, however, that this reasoning, if reasoning it may be called, which overlooks the obvious maxim, that the guilt of a being must be proportioned to his nature and powers, has fallen into disuse. Still the system teaches, that sin, of whatever degree, exposes to endless punishment, and that the whole human race, being infallibly involved by their nature in sin, owe this awful penalty to the justice of their Creator. It teaches, that this penalty cannot be remitted, in consistency with the honor of the divine law, unless a substitute be found to endure it or to suffer an equivalent. It also teaches,

that, from the nature of the case, no substitute is adequate to this work, save the infinite God himself; and accordingly, God, in his second person, took on him human nature, that he might pay to his own justice the debt of punishment incurred by men, and might thus reconcile forgiveness with the claims and threatenings of his law. Such is the prevalent system. Now, to us, this doctrine seems to carry on its front strong marks of absurdity; and we maintain that Christianity ought not to be encumbered with it, unless it be laid down in the New Testament fully and expressly. We ask our adversaries, then, to point to some plain passages where it is taught. We ask for one text, in which we are told, that God took human nature that he might make an infinite satisfaction to his own justice; for one text, which tells us, that human guilt requires an infinite substitute; that Christ's sufferings owe their efficacy to their being borne by an infinite being; or that his divine nature gives infinite value to the sufferings of the human. Not *one word* of this description can we find in the Scriptures; not a text, which even hints at these strange doctrines. They are altogether, we believe, the fictions of theologians. Christianity is in no degree responsible for them. We are astonished at their prevalence. What can be plainer, than that God cannot, in any sense, be a sufferer, or bear a penalty in the room of his creatures? How dishonorable to him is the supposition, that his justice is now so severe, as to exact infinite punishment for the sins of frail and feeble men, and now so easy and yielding, as to accept the limited pains of Christ's human soul, as a full equivalent for the endless woes due from the world? How plain is it also, according to this doctrine, that God,

instead of being plenteous in forgiveness, never forgives; for it seems absurd to speak of men as forgiven, when their whole punishment, or an equivalent to it, is borne by a substitute? A scheme more fitted to obscure the brightness of Christianity and the mercy of God, or less suited to give comfort to a guilty and troubled mind, could not, we think, be easily framed.

We believe, too, that this system is unfavorable to the character. It naturally leads men to think, that Christ came to change God's mind rather than their own; that the highest object of his mission was to avert punishment, rather than to communicate holiness; and that a large part of religion consists in disparaging good works and human virtue, for the purpose of magnifying the value of Christ's vicarious sufferings. In this way, a sense of the infinite importance and indispensable necessity of personal improvement is weakened, and high-sounding praises of Christ's cross seem often to be substituted for obedience to his precepts. For ourselves, we have not so learned Jesus. Whilst we gratefully acknowledge, that he came to rescue us from punishment, we believe, that he was sent on a still nobler errand, namely, to deliver us from sin itself, and to form us to a sublime and heavenly virtue. We regard him as a Saviour, chiefly as he is the light, physician, and guide of the dark, diseased, and wandering mind. No influence in the universe seems to us so glorious, as that over the character; and no redemption so worthy of thankfulness, as the restoration of the soul to purity. Without this, pardon, were it possible, would be of little value. Why pluck the sinner from hell, if a hell be left to burn in his own breast? Why raise him to heaven, if he remain a stranger to its sanc-

tity and love? With these impressions, we are accustomed to value the Gospel chiefly as it abounds in effectual aids, motives, excitements to a generous and divine virtue. In this virtue, as in a common centre, we see all its doctrines, precepts, promises meet; and we believe, that faith in this religion is of no worth, and contributes nothing to salvation, any farther than as it uses these doctrines, precepts, promises, and the whole life, character, sufferings, and triumphs of Jesus, as the means of purifying the mind, of changing it into the likeness of his celestial excellence.

5. Having thus stated our views of the highest object of Christ's mission, that it is the recovery of men to virtue, or holiness, I shall now, in the last place, give our views of the nature of Christian virtue, or true holiness. We believe that all virtue has its foundation in the moral nature of man, that is, in conscience, or his sense of duty, and in the power of forming his temper and life according to conscience. We believe that these moral faculties are the grounds of responsibility, and the highest distinctions of human nature and that no act is praiseworthy, any farther than it springs from their exertion. We believe, that no dispositions infused into us without our own moral activity, are of the nature of virtue, and therefore, we reject the doctrine of irresistible divine influence on the human mind, moulding it into goodness, as marble is hewn into a statue. Such goodness, if this word may be used, would not be the object of moral approbation, any more than the instinctive affections of inferior animals, or the constitutional amiableness of human beings.

By these remarks, we do not mean to deny the importance of God's aid or Spirit; but by his Spirit, we

mean a moral, illuminating, and persuasive influence, not physical, not compulsory, not involving a necessity of virtue. We object, strongly, to the idea of many Christians respecting man's impotence and God's irresistible agency on the heart, believing that they subvert our responsibility and the laws of our moral nature, that they make men machines, that they cast on God the blame of all evil deeds, that they discourage good minds, and inflate the fanatical with wild conceits of immediate and sensible inspiration.

Among the virtues, we give the first place to the love of God. We believe, that this principle is the true end and happiness of our being, that we were made for union with our Creator, that his infinite perfection is the only sufficient object and true resting-place for the insatiable desires and unlimited capacities of the human mind, and that, without him, our noblest sentiments, admiration, veneration, hope, and love, would wither and decay. We believe, too, that the love of God is not only essential to happiness, but to the strength and perfection of all the virtues; that conscience, without the sanction of God's authority and retributive justice, would be a weak director; that benevolence, unless nourished by communion with his goodness, and encouraged by his smile, could not thrive amidst the selfishness and thanklessness of the world; and that self-government, without a sense of the divine inspection, would hardly extend beyond an outward and partial purity. God, as he is essentially goodness, holiness, justice, and virtue, so he is the life, motive, and sustainer of virtue in the human soul.

But, whilst we earnestly inculcate the love of God, we believe that great care is necessary to distinguish it

from counterfeits. We think that much which is called piety is worthless. Many have fallen into the error, that there can be no excess in feelings which have God for their object; and, distrusting as coldness that self-possession, without which virtue and devotion lose all their dignity, they have abandoned themselves to extravagances, which have brought contempt on piety. Most certainly, if the love of God be that which often bears its name, the less we have of it the better. If religion be the shipwreck of understanding, we cannot keep too far from it. On this subject, we always speak plainly. We cannot sacrifice our reason to the reputation of zeal. We owe it to truth and religion to maintain, that fanaticism, partial insanity, sudden impressions, and ungovernable transports, are any thing rather than piety.

We conceive, that the true love of God is a moral sentiment, founded on a clear perception, and consisting in a high esteem and veneration, of his moral perfections. Thus, it perfectly coincides, and is in fact the same thing, with the love of virtue, rectitude, and goodness. You will easily judge, then, what we esteem the surest and only decisive signs of piety. We lay no stress on strong excitements. We esteem him, and him only a pious man, who practically conforms to God's moral perfections and government; who shows his delight in God's benevolence, by loving and serving his neighbour; his delight in God's justice, by being resolutely upright; his sense of God's purity, by regulating his thoughts, imagination, and desires; and whose conversation, business, and domestic life are swayed by a regard to God's presence and authority. In all things else men may deceive themselves. Disordered nerves

may give them strange sights, and sounds, and impressions. Texts of Scripture may come to them as from Heaven. Their whole souls may be moved, and their confidence in God's favor be undoubting. But in all this there is no religion. The question is, Do they love God's commands, in which his character is fully expressed, and give up to these their habits and passions? Without this, ecstasy is a mockery. One surrender of desire to God's will, is worth a thousand transports. We do not judge of the bent of men's minds by their raptures, any more than we judge of the natural direction of a tree during a storm. We rather suspect loud profession, for we have observed, that deep feeling is generally noiseless, and least seeks display.

We would not, by these remarks, be understood as wishing to exclude from religion warmth, and even transport. We honor, and highly value, true religious sensibility. We believe, that Christianity is intended to act powerfully on our whole nature, on the heart as well as the understanding and the conscience. We conceive of heaven as a state where the love of God will be exalted into an unbounded fervor and joy; and we desire, in our pilgrimage here, to drink into the spirit of that better world. But we think, that religious warmth is only to be valued, when it springs naturally from an improved character, when it comes unforced, when it is the recompense of obedience, when it is the warmth of a mind which understands God by being like him, and when, instead of disordering, it exalts the understanding, invigorates conscience, gives a pleasure to common duties, and is seen to exist in connexion with cheerfulness, judiciousness, and a reasonable frame of mind. When we observe a fervor, called religious,

in men whose general character expresses little refinement and elevation, and whose piety seems at war with reason, we pay it little respect. We honor religion too much to give its sacred name to a feverish, forced, fluctuating zeal, which has little power over the life.

Another important branch of virtue, we believe to be love to Christ. The greatness of the work of Jesus, the spirit with which he executed it, and the sufferings which he bore for our salvation, we feel to be strong claims on our gratitude and veneration. We see in nature no beauty to be compared with the loveliness of his character, nor do we find on earth a benefactor to whom we owe an equal debt. We read his history with delight, and learn from it the perfection of our nature. We are particularly touched by his death, which was endured for our redemption, and by that strength of charity which triumphed over his pains. His resurrection is the foundation of our hope of immortality. His intercession gives us boldness to draw nigh to the throne of grace, and we look up to heaven with new desire, when we think, that, if we follow him here, we shall there see his benignant countenance, and enjoy his friendship for ever.

I need not express to you our views on the subject of the benevolent virtues. We attach such importance to these, that we are sometimes reproached with exalting them above piety. We regard the spirit of love, charity, meekness, forgiveness, liberality, and beneficence, as the badge and distinction of Christians, as the brightest image we can bear of God, as the best proof of piety. On this subject, I need not, and cannot enlarge; but there is one branch of benevolence which I ought not to pass over in silence, because we think that

we conceive of it more highly and justly than many of our brethren. I refer to the duty of candor, charitable judgment, especially towards those who differ in religious opinion. We think, that in nothing have Christians so widely departed from their religion, as in this particular. We read with astonishment and horror, the history of the church; and sometimes when we look back on the fires of persecution, and on the zeal of Christians, in building up walls of separation, and in giving up one another to perdition, we feel as if we were reading the records of an infernal, rather than a heavenly kingdom. An enemy to every religion, if asked to describe a Christian, would, with some show of reason, depict him as an idolater of his own distinguishing opinions, covered with badges of party, shutting his eyes on the virtues, and his ears on the arguments, of his opponents, arrogating all excellence to his own sect and all saving power to his own creed, sheltering under the name of pious zeal the love of domination, the conceit of infallibility, and the spirit of intolerance, and trampling on men's rights under the pretence of saving their souls.

We can hardly conceive of a plainer obligation on beings of our frail and fallible nature, who are instructed in the duty of candid judgment, than to abstain from condemning men of apparent conscientiousness and sincerity, who are chargeable with no crime but that of differing from us in the interpretation of the Scriptures, and differing, too, on topics of great and acknowledged obscurity. We are astonished at the hardihood of those, who, with Christ's warnings sounding in their ears, take on them the responsibility of making creeds for his church, and cast out professors of virtuous lives for imagined errors, for the guilt of thinking for themselves.

We know that zeal for truth is the cover for this usurpation of Christ's prerogative; but we think that zeal for truth, as it is called, is very suspicious, except in men, whose capacities and advantages, whose patient deliberation, and whose improvements in humility, mildness, and candor, give them a right to hope that their views are more just than those of their neighbours. Much of what passes for a zeal for truth, we look upon with little respect, for it often appears to thrive most luxuriantly where other virtues shoot up thinly and feebly; and we have no gratitude for those reformers, who would force upon us a doctrine which has not sweetened their own tempers, or made them better men than their neighbours.

We are accustomed to think much of the difficulties attending religious inquiries; difficulties springing from the slow developement of our minds, from the power of early impressions, from the state of society, from human authority, from the general neglect of the reasoning powers, from the want of just principles of criticism and of important helps in interpreting Scripture, and from various other causes. We find, that on no subject have men, and even good men, ingrafted so many strange conceits, wild theories, and fictions of fancy, as on religion; and remembering, as we do, that we ourselves are sharers of the common frailty, we dare not assume infallibility in the treatment of our fellow-Christians, or encourage in common Christians, who have little time for investigation, the habit of denouncing and contemning other denominations, perhaps more enlightened and virtuous than their own. Charity, forbearance, a delight in the virtues of different sects, a backwardness to censure and condemn, these are vir-

tues, which, however poorly practised by us, we admire and recommend; and we would rather join ourselves to the church in which they abound, than to any other communion, however elated with the belief of its own orthodoxy, however strict in guarding its creed, however burning with zeal against imagined error.

I have thus given the distinguishing views of those Christians in whose names I have spoken. We have embraced this system, not hastily or lightly, but after much deliberation; and we hold it fast, not merely because we believe it to be true, but because we regard it as purifying truth, as a doctrine according to godliness, as able to "work mightily" and to "bring forth fruit" in them who believe. That we wish to spread it, we have no desire to conceal; but we think, that we wish its diffusion, because we regard it as more friendly to practical piety and pure morals than the opposite doctrines, because it gives clearer and nobler views of duty, and stronger motives to its performance, because it recommends religion at once to the understanding and the heart, because it asserts the lovely and venerable attributes of God, because it tends to restore the benevolent spirit of Jesus to his divided and afflicted church, and because it cuts off every hope of God's favor, except that which springs from practical conformity to the life and precepts of Christ. We see nothing in our views to give offence, save their purity, and it is their purity, which makes us seek and hope their extension through the world.

My friend and brother;—You are this day to take upon you important duties; to be clothed with an office, which the Son of God did not disdain; to devote your-

self to that religion, which the most hallowed lips have preached, and the most precious blood sealed. We trust that you will bring to this work a willing mind, a firm purpose, a martyr's spirit, a readiness to toil and suffer for the truth, a devotion of your best powers to the interests of piety and virtue. I have spoken of the doctrines which you will probably preach; but I do not mean, that you are to give yourself to controversy. You will remember, that good practice is the end of preaching, and will labor to make your people holy livers, rather than skilful disputants. Be careful, lest the desire of defending what you deem truth, and of repelling reproach and misrepresentation, turn you aside from your great business, which is to fix in men's minds a living conviction of the obligation, sublimity, and happiness of Christian virtue. The best way to vindicate your sentiments, is to show, in your preaching and life, their intimate connexion with Christian morals, with a high and delicate sense of duty, with candor towards your opposers, with inflexible integrity, and with an habitual reverence for God. If any light can pierce and scatter the clouds of prejudice, it is that of a pure example. My brother, may your life preach more loudly than your lips. Be to this people a pattern of all good works, and may your instructions derive authority from a well-grounded belief in your hearers, that you speak from the heart, that you preach from experience, that the truth which you dispense has wrought powerfully in your own heart, that God, and Jesus, and heaven, are not merely words on your lips, but most affecting realities to your mind, and springs of hope and consolation, and strength, in all your trials. Thus laboring, may you reap abundantly, and have a testimony of your faith-

fulness, not only in your own conscience, but in the esteem, love, virtues, and improvements of your people.

To all who hear me, I would say, with the Apostle, Prove all things, hold fast that which is good. Do not, brethren, shrink from the duty of searching God's Word for yourselves, through fear of human censure and denunciation. Do not think, that you may innocently follow the opinions which prevail around you, without investigation, on the ground, that Christianity is now so purified from errors, as to need no laborious research. There is much reason to believe, that Christianity is at this moment dishonored by gross and cherished corruptions. If you remember the darkness which hung over the Gospel for ages; if you consider the impure union, which still subsists in almost every Christian country, between the church and state, and which enlists men's selfishness and ambition on the side of established error; if you recollect in what degree the spirit of intolerance has checked free inquiry, not only before, but since the Reformation; you will see that Christianity cannot have freed itself from all the human inventions, which disfigured it under the Papal tyranny. No. Much stubble is yet to be burned; much rubbish to be removed; many gaudy decorations, which a false taste has hung around Christianity, must be swept away; and the earth-born fogs, which have long shrouded it, must be scattered, before this divine fabric will rise before us in its native and awful majesty, in its harmonious proportions, in its mild and celestial splendors. This glorious reformation in the church, we hope, under God's blessing, from the progress of the human intellect, from the moral progress of society, from the consequent decline of prejudice and bigotry, and, though last not least, from

the subversion of human authority in matters of religion, from the fall of those hierarchies, and other human institutions, by which the minds of individuals are oppressed under the weight of numbers, and a Papal dominion is perpetuated in the Protestant church. Our earnest prayer to God is, that he will overturn, and overturn, and overturn the strong-holds of spiritual usurpation, until HE shall come, whose right it is to rule the minds of men; that the conspiracy of ages against the liberty of Christians may be brought to an end; that the servile assent, so long yielded to human creeds, may give place to honest and devout inquiry into the Scriptures; and that Christianity, thus purified from error, may put forth its almigbty energy, and prove itself, by its ennobling influence on the mind, to be indeed "the power of God unto salvation."

THE

EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION.

DISCOURSE

BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY IN CAMBRIDGE, AT THE DUDLEIAN LECTURE,

14th MARCH, 1821.

JOHN iii. 2: "The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

THE evidences of revealed religion are the subject of this lecture, a subject of great extent, as well as of vast importance. In discussing it, an immense variety of learning has been employed, and all the powers of the intellect been called forth. History, metaphysics, ancient learning, criticism, ethical science, and the science of human nature, have been summoned to the controversy, and have brought important contributions to the Christian cause. To condense into one discourse what scholars and great men have written on this point, is impossible, even if it were desirable; and I have stated the extent of speculation into which our subject has led, not because I propose to give an abstract of others' labors, but because I wish you to understand,

that the topic is one not easily despatched, and because I would invite you to follow me in a discussion, which will require concentrated and continued attention. A subject more worthy of attention, than the claims of that religion which was impressed on our childhood, and which is acknowledged to be the only firm foundation of the hope of immortality, cannot be presented; and our minds must want the ordinary seriousness of human nature, if it cannot arrest us.

That Christianity has been opposed, is a fact, implied in the establishment of this lecture. That it has had adversaries of no mean intellect, you know. I propose in this discourse to make some remarks on what seems to me the great objection to Christianity, on the general principle on which its evidences rest, and on some of its particular evidences.

The great objection to Christianity, the only one which has much influence at the present day, meets us at the very threshold. We cannot, if we would, evade it, for it is founded on a primary and essential attribute of this religion. The objection is oftener felt than expressed, and amounts to this, that miracles are incredible, and that the supernatural character of an alleged fact is proof enough of its falsehood. So strong is this propensity to doubt of departures from the order of nature, that there are sincere Christians, who incline to rest their religion wholly on its internal evidence, and to overlook the outward extraordinary interposition of God, by which it was at first established. But the difficulty cannot in this way be evaded; for Christianity is not only confirmed by miracles, but is in itself, in its very essence, a miraculous religion. It is not a system

which the human mind might have gathered, in the ordinary exercise of its powers, from the ordinary course of nature. Its doctrines, especially those which relate to its founder, claim for it the distinction of being a supernatural provision for the recovery of the human race. So that the objection which I have stated still presses upon us, and, if it be well grounded, it is fatal to Christianity.

It is proper, then, to begin the discussion with inquiring, whence the disposition to discredit miracles springs, and how far it is rational. A preliminary remark of some importance is, that this disposition is not a necessary part or principle of our mental constitution, like the disposition to trace effects to adequate causes. We are indeed so framed, as to expect a continuance of that order of nature which we have uniformly experienced; but not so framed as to revolt at alleged violations of that order, and to account them impossible or absurd. On the contrary, men at large discover a strong and incurable propensity to believe in miracles. Almost all histories, until within the two last centuries, reported seriously supernatural facts. Skepticism as to miracles is comparatively a new thing, if we except the Epicurean or Atheistical sect among the ancients; and so far from being founded in human nature, it is resisted by an almost infinite preponderance of belief on the other side.

Whence, then, has this skepticism sprung? It may be explained by two principal causes. 1. It is now an acknowledged fact, among enlightened men, that in past times and in our own, a strong disposition has existed and still exists to admit miracles without examination. Human credulity is found to have devoured nothing

more eagerly than reports of prodigies. Now it is argued, that we discover here a principle of human nature, namely, the love of the supernatural and marvellous, which accounts sufficiently for the belief of miracles, wherever we find it; and that it is, consequently, unnecessary and unphilosophical to seek for other causes, and especially to admit that most improbable one, the actual existence of miracles. This sweeping conclusion is a specimen of that rash habit of generalizing, which rather distinguishes our times, and shows that philosophical reasoning has made fewer advances than we are apt to boast. It is true, that there is a principle of credulity as to prodigies in a considerable part of society, a disposition to believe without due scrutiny. But this principle, like every other in our nature, has its limits; acts according to fixed laws; is not omnipotent; cannot make the eyes see, and the ears hear, and the understanding credit delusions, under all imaginable circumstances; but requires the concurrence of various circumstances and of other principles of our nature in order to its operation. For example, the belief of spectral appearances has been very common; but under what circumstances and in what state of mind has it occurred? Do men see ghosts in broad day, and amidst cheerful society? Or in solitary places; in grave-yards; in twilights or mists, where outward objects are so undefined, as easily to take a form from imagination; and in other circumstances favorable to terror, and associated with the delusion in question? The principle of credulity is as regular in its operation, as any other principle of the mind; and is so dependent on circumstances and so restrained and checked by other parts of human nature, that sometimes the most obstinate incredulity is

found in that very class of people, whose easy belief on other occasions moves our contempt. It is well known, for example, that the efficacy of the vaccine inoculation has been encountered with much more unyielding skepticism among the vulgar, than among the improved; and in general, it may be affirmed, that the credulity of the ignorant operates under the control of their strongest passions and impressions, and that no class of society yield a slower assent to positions, which manifestly subvert their old modes of thinking and most settled prejudices. It is, then, very unphilosophical to assume this principle as an explanation of all miracles whatever. I grant that the fact, that accounts of supernatural agency so generally prove false, is a reason for looking upon them with peculiar distrust. Miracles ought on this account to be sifted more than common facts. But if we find, that a belief in a series of supernatural works, has occurred under circumstances very different from those under which false prodigies have been received, under circumstances most unfavorable to the operation of credulity; then this belief cannot be resolved into the common causes, which have blinded men in regard to supernatural agency. We must look for other causes, and if none can be found but the actual existence of the miracles, then true philosophy binds us to believe them. I close this head with observing, that the propensity of men to believe in what is strange and miraculous, though a presumption against particular miracles, is not a presumption against miracles universally, but rather the reverse; for great principles of human nature have generally a foundation in truth, and one explanation of this propensity so common to mankind is obviously this, that in the earlier ages of the

human race, miraculous interpositions, suited to man's infant state, were not uncommon, and, being the most striking facts of human history, they spread through all future times a belief and expectation of miracles.

I proceed now to the second cause of the skepticism in regard to supernatural agency, which has grown up, especially among the more improved, in later times. These later times are distinguished, as you well know, by successful researches into nature; and the discoveries of science have continually added strength to that great principle, that the phenomena of the universe are regulated by general and permanent laws, or that the Author of the universe exerts his power according to an established order. Nature, the more it is explored, is found to be uniform. We observe an unbroken succession of causes and effects. Many phenomena, once denominated irregular, and ascribed to supernatural agency, are found to be connected with preceding circumstances, as regularly as the most common events. The comet, we learn, observes the same attraction as the sun and planets. When a new phenomenon now occurs, no one thinks it miraculous, but believes, that, when better understood, it may be reduced to laws already known, or is an example of a law not yet investigated.

Now this increasing acquaintance with the uniformity of nature begets a distrust of alleged violations of it, and a rational distrust too; for, while many causes of mistake in regard to alleged miracles may be assigned, there is but one adequate cause of real miracles, that is, the power of God; and the regularity of nature forms a strong presumption against the miraculous exertion of this power, except in extraordinary circumstances, and for extraordinary purposes, to which the established laws

of the creation are not competent. But the observation of the uniformity of nature produces, in multitudes, not merely this rational distrust of alleged violations of it, but a secret feeling, as if such violations were impossible. That attention to the powers of nature, which is implied in scientific research, tends to weaken the practical conviction of a higher power ; and the laws of the creation, instead of being regarded as the modes of Divine operation, come insensibly to be considered as fetters on his agency, as too sacred to be suspended even by their Author. This secret feeling, essentially atheistical, and at war with all sound philosophy, is the chief foundation of that skepticism, which prevails in regard to miraculous agency, and deserves our particular consideration.

To a man whose belief in God is strong and practical, a miracle will appear as possible as any other effect, as the most common event in life ; and the argument against miracles, drawn from the uniformity of nature, will weigh with him, only as far as this uniformity is a pledge and proof of the Creator's disposition to accomplish his purposes by a fixed order or mode of operation. Now it is freely granted, that the Creator's regard or attachment to such an order may be inferred from the steadiness with which he observes it ; and a strong presumption lies against any violation of it on slight occasions, or for purposes to which the established laws of nature are adequate. But this is the utmost which the order of nature authorizes us to infer respecting its Author. It forms no presumption against miracles universally, in all imaginable cases ; but may even furnish a presumption in their favor.

We are never to forget, that God's adherence to the

order of the universe is not necessary and mechanical, but intelligent and voluntary. He adheres to it, not for its own sake, or because it has a sacredness which compels him to respect it, but because it is most suited to accomplish his purposes. It is a means, and not an end; and, like all other means, must give way when the end can best be promoted without it. It is the mark of a weak mind, to make an idol of order and method; to cling to established forms of business, when they clog instead of advancing it. If, then, the great purposes of the universe can best be accomplished by departing from its established laws, these laws will undoubtedly be suspended; and, though broken in the letter, they will be observed in their spirit, for the ends for which they were first instituted will be advanced by their violation. Now the question arises, For what purposes were nature and its order appointed? and there is no presumption in saying, that the highest of these is the improvement of intelligent beings. Mind (by which we mean both moral and intellectual powers) is God's first end. The great purpose for which an order of nature is fixed, is plainly the formation of Mind. In a creation without order, where events would follow without any regular succession, it is obvious, that Mind must be kept in perpetual infancy; for, in such a universe, there could be no reasoning from effects to causes, no induction to establish general truths, no adaptation of means to ends; that is, no science relating to God, or matter, or mind; no action; no virtue. The great purpose of God, then, I repeat it, in establishing the order of nature, is to form and advance the mind; and if the case should occur, in which the interests of the mind could best be advanced by departing from this order, or by miraculous agency,

then the great purpose of the creation, the great end of its laws and regularity, would demand such departure; and miracles, instead of warring against, would concur with nature.

Now, we Christians maintain, that such a case has existed. We affirm, that, when Jesus Christ came into the world, nature had failed to communicate instructions to men, in which, as intelligent beings, they had the deepest concern, and on which the full developement of their highest faculties essentially depended; and we affirm, that there was no prospect of relief from nature; so that an exigence had occurred, in which additional communications, supernatural lights, might rationally be expected from the Father of spirits. Let me state two particulars, out of many, in which men needed intellectual aids not given by nature. I refer to the doctrine of one God and Father, on which all piety rests; and to the doctrine of Immortality, which is the great spring of virtuous effort. Had I time to enlarge on the history of that period, I might show you under what heaps of rubbish and superstition these doctrines were buried. But I should repeat only what you know familiarly. The works of ancient genius, which form your studies, carry on their front the brand of polytheism, and of debasing error on subjects of the first and deepest concern. It is more important to observe, that the very uniformity of nature had some tendency to obscure the doctrines which I have named, or at least to impair their practical power, so that a departure from this uniformity was needed to fasten them on men's minds.

That a fixed order of nature, though a proof of the One God to reflecting and enlarged understandings, has yet a tendency to hide him from men in general, will

appear, if we consider, first, that, as the human mind is constituted, what is regular and of constant occurrence, excites it feebly; and benefits flowing to it through fixed, unchanging laws, seem to come by a kind of necessity, and are apt to be traced up to natural causes alone. Accordingly, religious convictions and feelings, even in the present advanced condition of society, are excited, not so much by the ordinary course of God's providence, as by sudden, unexpected events, which rouse and startle the mind, and speak of a power higher than nature. — There is another way, in which a fixed order of nature seems unfavorable to just impressions respecting its Author. It discovers to us in the Creator, a regard to general good rather than an affection to individuals. The laws of nature, operating, as they do, with an inflexible steadiness, never varying to meet the cases and wants of individuals, and inflicting much private suffering in their stern administration for the general weal, give the idea of a distant, reserved sovereign, much more than of a tender parent; and yet this last view of God is the only effectual security from superstition and idolatry. Nature, then, we fear, would not have brought back the world to its Creator. — And as to the doctrine of Immortality, the order of the natural world had little tendency to teach this, at least with clearness and energy. The natural world contains no provisions or arrangements for reviving the dead. The sun and the rain, which cover the tomb with verdure, send no vital influences to the mouldering body. The researches of science detect no secret processes for restoring the lost powers of life. If man is to live again, he is not to live through any known laws of nature, but by a power higher than nature; and how, then, can we be assured of this

truth, but by a manifestation of this power, that is, by miraculous agency, confirming a future life ?

I have labored in these remarks to show, that the uniformity of nature is no presumption against miraculous agency, when employed in confirmation of such a religion as Christianity. Nature, on the contrary, furnishes a presumption in its favor. Nature clearly shows to us a power above itself, so that it proves miracles to be possible. Nature reveals purposes and attributes in its Author, with which Christianity remarkably agrees. Nature too has deficiencies, which show that it was not intended by its Author to be his whole method of instructing mankind ; and in this way it gives great confirmation to Christianity, which meets its wants, supplies its chasms, explains its mysteries, and lightens its heart-oppressing cares and sorrows.

Before quitting the general consideration of miracles, I ought to take some notice of Hume's celebrated argument on this subject ; not that it merits the attention which it has received, but because it is specious, and has derived weight from the name of its author. The argument is briefly this, — " that belief is founded upon and regulated by experience. Now we often experience testimony to be false, but never witness a departure from the order of nature. That men may deceive us when they testify to miracles, is therefore more accordant with experience, than that nature should be irregular ; and hence there is a balance of proof against miracles, a presumption so strong as to outweigh the strongest testimony." The usual replies to this argument I have not time to repeat. Dr. Campbell's work, which is accessible to all, will show you that it rests on an equivocal use of terms, and will furnish you with many fine re-

marks on testimony and on the conditions or qualities which give it validity. I will only add a few remarks which seem to me worthy of attention.

1. This argument affirms, that the credibility of facts or statements is to be decided by their accordance with the established order of nature, and by this standard only. Now, if nature comprehended all existences and all powers, this position might be admitted. But if there is a Being higher than nature, the origin of all its powers and motions, and whose character falls under our notice and experience as truly as the creation, then there is an additional standard to which facts and statements are to be referred; and works which violate nature's order, will still be credible, if they agree with the known properties and attributes of its author; because for such works we can assign an adequate cause and sufficient reasons, and these are the qualities and conditions on which credibility depends.

2. This argument of Hume proves too much, and therefore proves nothing. It proves too much; for if I am to reject the strongest testimony to miracles, because testimony has often deceived me, whilst nature's order has never been found to fail, then I ought to reject a miracle, even if I should see it with my own eyes, and if all my senses should attest it; for all my senses have sometimes given false reports, whilst nature has never gone astray; and, therefore, be the circumstances ever so decisive or inconsistent with deception, still I must not believe what I see, and hear, and touch, what my senses, exercised according to the most deliberate judgment, declare to be true. All this the argument requires; and it proves too much; for disbelief, in the case supposed, is out of our power, and is instinctively

pronounced absurd ; and what is more, it would subvert that very order of nature on which the argument rests ; for this order of nature is learned only by the exercise of my senses and judgment, and if these fail me, in the most unexceptionable circumstances, then their testimony to nature is of little worth.

Once more ; this argument is built on an ignorance of the nature of testimony. Testimony, we are told, cannot prove a miracle. Now the truth is, that testimony of itself and immediately, proves no facts whatever, not even the most common. Testimony can do nothing more than show us the state of another's mind in regard to a given fact. It can only show us, that the testifier has a belief, a conviction, that a certain phenomenon or event has occurred. Here testimony stops ; and the reality of the event is to be judged altogether from the nature and degree of this conviction, and from the circumstances under which it exists. This conviction is an effect, which must have a cause, and needs to be explained ; and if no cause can be found but the real occurrence of the event, then this occurrence is admitted as true. Such is the extent of testimony. Now a man, who affirms a miraculous phenomenon or event, may give us just as decisive proofs, by his character and conduct, of the strength and depth of his conviction, as if he were affirming a common occurrence. Testimony, then, does just as much in the case of miracles, as of common events ; that is, it discloses to us the conviction of another's mind. Now this conviction in the case of miracles requires a cause, an explanation, as much as in every other ; and if the circumstances be such, that it could not have sprung up and been established but by the reality of the alleged miracle, then that

great and fundamental principle of human belief, namely, that every effect must have a cause, compels us to admit the miracle.

It may be observed of Hume and of other philosophical opposers of our religion, that they are much more inclined to argue against miracles in general, than against the particular miracles on which Christianity rests. And the reason is obvious. Miracles, when considered in a general, abstract manner, that is, when divested of all circumstances, and supposed to occur as disconnected facts, to stand alone in history, to have no explanations or reasons in preceding events, and no influence on those which follow, are indeed open to great objection, as wanton and useless violations of nature's order; and it is accordingly against miracles, considered in this naked, general form, that the arguments of infidelity are chiefly urged. But it is great disingenuity to class under this head the miracles of Christianity. They are palpably different. They do not stand alone in history; but are most intimately incorporated with it. They were demanded by the state of the world which preceded them, and they have left deep traces on all subsequent ages. In fact, the history of the whole civilized world, since their alleged occurrence, has been swayed and colored by them, and is wholly inexplicable without them. Now, such miracles are not to be met and disposed of by general reasonings, which apply only to insulated, unimportant, uninfluential prodigies.

I have thus considered the objections to miracles in general; and I would close this head with observing, that these objections will lose their weight, just in proportion as we strengthen our conviction of God's power over nature and of his parental interest in his creatures.

The great repugnance to the belief of miraculous agency is founded in a lurking atheism, which ascribes supremacy to nature, and which, whilst it professes to believe in God, questions his tender concern for the improvement of men. To a man, who cherishes a sense of God, the great difficulty is, not to account for miracles, but to account for their rare occurrence. One of the mysteries of the universe is this, that its Author retires so continually behind the veil of his works, that the great and good Father does not manifest himself more distinctly to his creatures. There is something like coldness and repulsiveness in instructing us only by fixed, inflexible laws of nature. The intercourse of God with Adam and the patriarchs suits our best conceptions of the relation which he bears to the human race, and ought not to surprise us more, than the expression of a human parent's tenderness and concern towards his offspring.

After the remarks now made to remove the objection to revelation in general, I proceed to consider the evidences of the Christian religion in particular; and these are so numerous, that should I attempt to compress them into the short space which now remains, I could give but a syllabus, a dry and uninteresting index. It will be more useful to state to you, with some distinctness, the general principle into which all Christian evidences may be resolved, and on which the whole religion rests, and then to illustrate it in a few striking particulars.

All the evidences of Christianity may be traced to this great principle, — that every effect must have an adequate cause. We claim for our religion a divine

original, because no adequate cause for it can be found in the powers or passions of human nature, or in the circumstances under which it appeared; because it can only be accounted for by the interposition of that Being, to whom its first preachers universally ascribed it, and with whose nature it perfectly agrees.

Christianity, by which we mean not merely the doctrines of the religion, but every thing relating to it, its rise, its progress, the character of its author, the conduct of its propagators, — Christianity, in this broad sense, can only be accounted for in two ways. It either sprung from the principles of human nature, under the excitements, motives, impulses of the age in which it was first preached; or it had its origin in a higher and supernatural agency. To which of these causes the religion should be referred, is not a question beyond our reach; for being partakers of human nature, and knowing more of it than of any other part of creation, we can judge with sufficient accuracy of the operation of its principles, and of the effects to which they are competent. It is indeed true, that human powers are not exactly defined, nor can we state precisely the bounds beyond which they cannot pass; but still, the disproportion between human nature and an effect ascribed to it, may be so vast and palpable, as to satisfy us at once, that the effect is inexplicable by human power. I know not precisely what advances may be made by the intellect of an unassisted savage; but that a savage in the woods could not compose the "Principia" of Newton, is about as plain as that he could not create the world. I know not the point at which bodily strength must stop; but that a man cannot carry Atlas or Andes on his shoulders, is a safe position. The

question, therefore, whether the principles of human nature, under the circumstances in which it was placed at Christ's birth, will explain his religion, is one to which we are competent, and is the great question on which the whole controversy turns.

Now we maintain, that a great variety of facts belonging to this religion, — such as the character of its Founder; its peculiar principles; the style and character of its records; its progress; the conduct, circumstances, and sufferings of its first propagators; the reception of it from the first on the ground of miraculous attestations; the prophecies which it fulfilled and which it contains; its influence on society, and other circumstances connected with it; are utterly inexplicable by human powers and principles, but accord with, and are fully explained by, the power and perfections of God.

These various particulars I cannot attempt to unfold. One or two may be illustrated to show you the mode of applying the principles which I have laid down. I will take first the character of Jesus Christ. How is this to be explained by the principles of human nature? — We are immediately struck with this peculiarity in the Author of Christianity, that, whilst all other men are formed in a measure by the spirit of the age, we can discover in Jesus no impression of the period in which he lived. We know with considerable accuracy the state of society, the modes of thinking, the hopes and expectations of the country in which Jesus was born and grew up; and he is as free from them, and as exalted above them, as if he had lived in another world, or with every sense shut on the objects around him. His character has in it nothing local or temporary. It can be explained by nothing around him. His history

shows him to us a solitary being, living for purposes which none but himself comprehended, and enjoying not so much as the sympathy of a single mind. His Apostles, his chosen companions, brought to him the spirit of the age; and nothing shows its strength more strikingly, than the slowness with which it yielded in these honest men to the instructions of Jesus.

Jesus came to a nation expecting a Messiah; and he claimed this character. But instead of conforming to the opinions which prevailed in regard to the Messiah, he resisted them wholly and without reserve. To a people anticipating a triumphant leader, under whom vengeance as well as ambition was to be glutted by the prostration of their oppressors, he came as a spiritual leader, teaching humility and peace. This undisguised hostility to the dearest hopes and prejudices of his nation; this disdain of the usual compliances, by which ambition and imposture conciliate adherents; this deliberate exposure of himself to rejection and hatred, cannot easily be explained by the common principles of human nature, and excludes the possibility of selfish aims in the Author of Christianity.

One striking peculiarity in Jesus is the extent, the vastness, of his views. Whilst all around him looked for a Messiah to liberate God's ancient people, whilst to every other Jew, Judea was the exclusive object of pride and hope, Jesus came, declaring himself to be the deliverer and light of the world, and in his whole teaching and life, you see a consciousness, which never forsakes him, of a relation to the whole human race. This idea of blessing mankind, of spreading a universal religion, was the most magnificent which had ever entered man's mind. All previous religions had been

given to particular nations. No conqueror, legislator, philosopher, in the extravagance of ambition, had ever dreamed of subjecting all nations to a common faith.

This conception of a universal religion, intended alike for Jew and Gentile, for all nations and climes, is wholly inexplicable by the circumstances of Jesus. He was a Jew, and the first and deepest and most constant impression on a Jew's mind, was that of the superiority conferred on his people and himself by the national religion introduced by Moses. The wall between the Jew and the Gentile seemed to reach to heaven. The abolition of the peculiarity of Moses, the prostration of the temple on Mount Zion, the erection of a new religion, in which all men would meet as brethren, and which would be the common and equal property of Jew and Gentile, these were of all ideas the last to spring up in Judea, the last for enthusiasm or imposture to originate.

Compare next these views of Christ with his station in life. He was of humble birth and education, with nothing in his lot, with no extensive means, no rank, or wealth, or patronage, to infuse vast thoughts and extravagant plans. The shop of a carpenter, the village of Nazareth, were not spots for ripening a scheme more aspiring and extensive than had ever been formed. It is a principle of human nature, that, except in case of insanity, some proportion is observed between the power of an individual, and his plans and hopes. The purpose, to which Jesus devoted himself, was as ill suited to his condition as an attempt to change the seasons, or to make the sun rise in the west. That a young man, in obscure life, belonging to an oppressed nation, should seriously think of subverting the time-hallowed

and deep-rooted religions of the world, is a strange fact; but with this purpose we see the mind of Jesus thoroughly imbued; and, sublime as it is, he never falls below it in his language or conduct, but speaks and acts with a consciousness of superiority, with a dignity and authority, becoming this unparalleled destination.

In this connexion, I cannot but add another striking circumstance in Jesus, and that is, the calm confidence with which he always looked forward to the accomplishment of his design. He fully knew the strength of the passions and powers which were arrayed against him, and was perfectly aware that his life was to be shortened by violence; yet not a word escapes him implying a doubt of the ultimate triumphs of his religion. One of the beauties of the Gospels, and one of the proofs of their genuineness, is found in our Saviour's indirect and obscure allusions to his approaching sufferings, and to the glory which was to follow; allusions showing us the workings of a mind, thoroughly conscious of being appointed to accomplish infinite good through great calamity. This entire and patient relinquishment of immediate success, this ever present persuasion, that he was to perish before his religion would advance, and this calm, unshaken anticipation of distant and unbounded triumphs, are remarkable traits, throwing a tender and solemn grandeur over our Lord, and wholly inexplicable by human principles, or by the circumstances in which he was placed.

The views hitherto taken of Christ relate to his public character and office. If we pass to what may be called his private character, we shall receive the same impression of inexplicable excellence. The most strik-

ing trait in Jesus was, undoubtedly, benevolence; and, although this virtue had existed before, yet it had not been manifested in the same form and extent. Christ's benevolence was distinguished first by its expansiveness. At that age, an unconfined philanthropy, proposing and toiling to do good without distinction of country or rank, was unknown. Love to man as man, love comprehending the hated Samaritan and the despised publican, was a feature which separated Jesus from the best men of his nation and of the world. Another characteristic of the benevolence of Jesus, was its gentleness and tenderness, forming a strong contrast with the hardness and ferocity of the spirit and manners which then prevailed, and with that sternness and inflexibility, which the purest philosophy of Greece and Rome inculcated as the perfection of virtue. But its most distinguishing trait was its superiority to injury. Revenge was one of the recognised rights of the age in which he lived; and though a few sages, who had seen its inconsistency with man's dignity, had condemned it, yet none had inculcated the duty of regarding one's worst enemies with that kindness which God manifests to sinful men, and of returning curses with blessings and prayers. This form of benevolence, the most disinterested and divine form, was, as you well know, manifested by Jesus Christ in infinite strength, amidst injuries and indignities which cannot be surpassed. Now this singular eminence of goodness, this superiority to the degrading influences of the ages, under which all other men suffered, needs to be explained; and one thing it demonstrates, that Jesus Christ was not an unprincipled deceiver, exposing not only his own life but the lives of confiding friends, in an enterprise next to desperate.

I cannot enlarge on other traits of the character of Christ. I will only observe, that it had one distinction, which more than any thing, forms a perfect character. It was made up of contrasts; in other words, it was a union of excellences which are not easily reconciled, which seem at first sight incongruous, but which, when blended and duly proportioned, constitute moral harmony, and attract, with equal power, love and veneration. For example, we discover in Jesus Christ an unparalleled dignity of character, a consciousness of greatness, never discovered or approached by any other individual in history; and yet this was blended with a condescension, lowliness, and unostentatious simplicity, which had never before been thought consistent with greatness. In like manner, he united an utter superiority to the world, to its pleasures and ordinary interests, with suavity of manners and freedom from austerity. He joined strong feeling and self-possession; an indignant sensibility to sin, and compassion to the sinner; an intense devotion to his work, and calmness under opposition and ill success; a universal philanthropy, and a susceptibility of private attachments; the authority which became the Saviour of the world, and the tenderness and gratitude of a son. Such was the author of our religion. And is his character to be explained by imposture or insane enthusiasm? Does it not bear the unambiguous marks of a heavenly origin?

Perhaps it may be said, this character never existed. Then the invention of it is to be explained, and the reception which this fiction met with; and these perhaps are as difficult of explanation on natural principles, as its real existence. Christ's history bears all the marks of reality; a more frank, simple, unlabored, unosten-

tatious narrative was never penned. Besides, his character, if invented, must have been an invention of singular difficulty, because no models existed on which to frame it. He stands alone in the records of time. The conception of a being, proposing such new and exalted ends, and governed by higher principles than the progress of society had developed, implies singular intellectual power. That several individuals should join in equally vivid conceptions of this character; and should not merely describe in general terms the fictitious being to whom it was attributed, but should introduce him into real life, should place him in a great variety of circumstances, in connexion with various ranks of men, with friends and foes, and should in all preserve his identity, show the same great and singular mind always acting in harmony with itself; this is a supposition hardly credible, and, when the circumstances of the writers of the New Testament are considered, seems to be as inexplicable on human principles, as what I before suggested, the composition of Newton's "Principia" by a savage. The character of Christ, though delineated in an age of great moral darkness, has stood the scrutiny of ages; and, in proportion as men's moral sentiments have been refined, its beauty has been more seen and felt. To suppose it invented, is to suppose that its authors, outstripping their age, had attained to a singular delicacy and elevation of moral perception and feeling. But these attainments are not very reconcilable with the character of its authors, supposing it to be a fiction; that is, with the character of habitual liars and impious deceivers.

But we are not only unable to discover powers adequate to this invention. There must have been motives

for it; for men do not make great efforts, without strong motives; and, in the whole compass of human incitements, we challenge the infidel to suggest any, which could have prompted to the work now to be explained.

Once more, it must be recollected, that this invention, if it were one, was received as real, at a period so near to the time ascribed to Christ's appearance, that the means of detecting it were infinite. That men should send out such a forgery, and that it should prevail and triumph, are circumstances not easily reconcilable with the principles of our nature.

The character of Christ, then, was real. Its reality is the only explanation of the mighty revolution produced by his religion. And how can you account for it, but by that cause to which he always referred it,—a mission from the Father?

Next to the character of Christ, his religion might be shown to abound in circumstances which contradict and repel the idea of a human origin. For example, its representations of the paternal character of God; its inculcation of a universal charity; the stress which it lays on inward purity; its substitution of a spiritual worship for the forms and ceremonies, which everywhere had usurped the name and extinguished the life of religion; its preference of humility, and of the mild, unostentatious, passive virtues, to the dazzling qualities which had monopolized men's admiration; its consistent and bright discoveries of immortality; its adaptation to the wants of man as a sinner; its adaptation to all the conditions, capacities, and sufferings of human nature; its pure, sublime, yet practicable morality; its high and generous motives; and its fitness to form a

character, which plainly prepares for a higher life than the present; these are peculiarities of Christianity, which will strike us more and more, in proportion as we understand distinctly the circumstances of the age and country in which this religion appeared, and for which no adequate human cause has been or can be assigned.

Passing over these topics, each of which might be enlarged into a discourse, I will make but one remark on this religion, which strikes my own mind very forcibly. Since its introduction, human nature has made great progress, and society experienced great changes; and in this advanced condition of the world, Christianity, instead of losing its application and importance, is found to be more and more congenial and adapted to man's nature and wants. Men have outgrown the other institutions of that period when Christianity appeared, its philosophy, its modes of warfare, its policy, its public and private economy; but Christianity has never shrunk as intellect has opened, but has always kept in advance of men's faculties, and unfolded nobler views in proportion as they have ascended. The highest powers and affections, which our nature has developed, find more than adequate objects in this religion. Christianity is indeed peculiarly fitted to the more improved stages of society, to the more delicate sensibilities of refined minds, and especially to that dissatisfaction with the present state, which always grows with the growth of our moral powers and affections. As men advance in civilization, they become susceptible of mental sufferings, to which ruder ages are strangers; and these Christianity is fitted to assuage. Imagination and intellect become more restless; and Christianity

brings them tranquillity, by the eternal and magnificent truths, the solemn and unbounded prospects, which it unfolds. This fitness of our religion to more advanced stages of society than that in which it was introduced, to wants of human nature not then developed, seems to me very striking. The religion bears the marks of having come from a being who perfectly understood the human mind, and had power to provide for its progress. This feature of Christianity is of the nature of prophecy. It was an anticipation of future and distant ages; and, when we consider among whom our religion sprung, where, but in God, can we find an explanation of this peculiarity?

I have now offered a few hints on the character of Christ, and on the character of his religion; and, before quitting these topics, I would observe, that they form a strong presumption in favor of the miraculous facts of the Christian history. These miracles were not wrought by a man, whose character, in other respects, was ordinary. They were acts of a being, whose mind was as singular as his works, who spoke and acted with more than human authority, whose moral qualities and sublime purposes were in accordance with superhuman powers. Christ's miracles are in unison with his whole character, and bear a proportion to it, like that which we observe in the most harmonious productions of nature; and in this way they receive from it great confirmation. And the same presumption in their favor arises from his religion. That a religion, carrying in itself such marks of divinity, and so inexplicable on human principles, should receive outward confirmations from Omnipotence, is not surprising. The extraordinary character of the religion accords with and seems to de-

mand extraordinary interpositions in its behalf. Its miracles are not solitary, naked, unexplained, disconnected events, but are bound up with a system, which is worthy of God, and impressed with God; which occupies a large space, and is operating, with great and increasing energy, in human affairs.

As yet I have not touched on what seem to many writers the strongest proofs of Christianity, I mean the direct evidences of its miracles; by which we mean the testimony borne to them, including the character, conduct, and condition of the witnesses. These I have not time to unfold; nor is this labor needed; for Paley's inestimable work, which is one of your classical books, has stated these proofs with great clearness and power. I would only observe, that they may all be resolved into this single principle, namely, that the Christian miracles were originally believed under such circumstances, that this belief can only be explained by their actual occurrence. That Christianity was received at first on the ground of miracles, and that its first preachers and converts proved the depth and strength of their conviction of these facts, by attesting them in sufferings and in death, we know from the most ancient records which relate to this religion, both Christian and Heathen; and, in fact, this conviction can alone explain their adherence to Christianity. Now, that this conviction could only have sprung from the reality of the miracles, we infer from the known circumstances of these witnesses, whose passions, interests, and strongest prejudices were originally hostile to the new religion; whose motives for examining with care the facts on which it rested, were as urgent and

solemn, and whose means and opportunities of ascertaining their truth were as ample and unfailing, as can be conceived to conspire; so that the supposition of their falsehood cannot be admitted, without subverting our trust in human judgment and human testimony under the most favorable circumstances for discovering truth; that is, without introducing universal skepticism.

There is one class of Christian evidences, to which I have but slightly referred, but which has struck with peculiar force men of reflecting minds. I refer to the marks of truth and reality, which are found in the Christian Records; to the internal proofs, which the books of the New Testament carry with them, of having been written by men who lived in the first age of Christianity, who believed and felt its truth, who bore a part in the labors and conflicts which attended its establishment, and who wrote from personal knowledge and deep conviction. A few remarks to illustrate the nature and power of these internal proofs, which are furnished by the books of the New Testament, I will now subjoin.

The New Testament consists of histories and epistles. The historical books, namely, the Gospels and the Acts, are a continued narrative, embracing many years, and professing to give the history of the rise and progress of the religion. Now it is worthy of observation, that these writings completely answer their end; that they completely solve the problem, how this peculiar religion grew up and established itself in the world; that they furnish precise and adequate causes for this stupendous revolution in human affairs. It is also worthy of remark, that they relate a series of facts, which are not only connected with one another, but are

intimately linked with the long series which has followed them, and agree accurately with subsequent history, so as to account for and sustain it. Now, that a collection of fictitious narratives, coming from different hands, comprehending many years, and spreading over many countries, should not only form a consistent whole, when taken by themselves ; but should also connect and interweave themselves with real history so naturally and intimately, as to furnish no clue for detection, as to exclude the appearance of incongruity and discordance, and as to give an adequate explanation and the only explanation of acknowledged events, of the most important revolution in society ; this is a supposition from which an intelligent man at once revolts, and which, if admitted, would shake a principal foundation of history.

I have before spoken of the unity and consistency of Christ's character as developed in the Gospels, and of the agreement of the different writers in giving us the singular features of his mind. Now there are the same marks of truth running through the whole of these narratives. For example, the effects produced by Jesus on the various classes of society ; the different feelings of admiration, attachment, and envy, which he called forth ; the various expressions of these feelings ; the prejudices, mistakes, and gradual illumination of his disciples ; these are all given to us with such marks of truth and reality as could not easily be counterfeited. The whole history is precisely such, as might be expected from the actual appearance of such a person as Jesus Christ, in such a state of society as then existed.

The Epistles, if possible, abound in marks of truth and reality even more than the Gospels. They are

imbued thoroughly with the spirit of the first age of Christianity. They bear all the marks of having come from men plunged in the conflicts which the new religion excited, alive to its interests, identified with its fortunes. They betray the very state of mind which must have been generated by the peculiar condition of the first propagators of the religion. They are letters written on real business, intended for immediate effects, designed to meet prejudices and passions, which such a religion must at first have awakened. They contain not a trace of the circumstances of a later age, or of the feelings, impressions, and modes of thinking by which later times were characterized, and from which later writers could not easily have escaped. The letters of Paul have a remarkable agreement with his history. They are precisely such as might be expected from a man of a vehement mind, who had been brought up in the schools of Jewish literature, who had been converted by a sudden, overwhelming miracle, who had been intrusted with the preaching of the new religion to the Gentiles, and who was everywhere met by the prejudices and persecuting spirit of his own nation. They are full of obscurities growing out of these points of Paul's history and character, and out of the circumstances of the infant church, and which nothing but an intimate acquaintance with that early period can illustrate. This remarkable infusion of the spirit of the first age into the Christian Records, cannot easily be explained but by the fact, that they were written in that age by the real and zealous propagators of Christianity, and that they are records of real convictions and of actual events.

youth, is found to be our strength and consolation, and the only effectual spring of persevering and victorious virtue, when the realities of life have scattered our visionary hopes; when pain, disappointment, and temptation press upon us; when this world's enjoyments are found unable to quench that deep thirst of happiness which burns in every breast; when friends, whom we love as our own souls, die; and our own graves open before us. — To all who hear me, and especially to my young hearers, I would say, let the truth of this religion be the strongest conviction of your understandings; let its motives and precepts sway with an absolute power your characters and lives.

THE

DEMANDS OF THE AGE ON THE MINISTRY.

DISCOURSE

AT THE

ORDINATION OF THE REV. E. S. GANNETT.

Boston, 1824.

Matthew x. 16: "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

The communication of moral and religious truth is the most important office committed to men. The Son of God came into the world, not to legislate for nations, not to command armies, not to sit on the throne of universal monarchy; but to teach religion, to establish truth and holiness. The highest end of human nature is duty, virtue, piety, excellence, moral greatness, spiritual glory; and he who effectually labors for these, is taking part with God, in God's noblest work. The Christian ministry, then, which has for its purpose men's spiritual improvement and salvation, and which is intrusted for this end with weapons of heavenly temper and power, deserves to be ranked amongst God's most beneficent institutions and men's most honorable labors. The

occasion requires that this institution should be our principal topic.

How happy a change has taken place since the words of Christ in the text were spoken! Ministers are no longer sent forth into the midst of wolves. Through the labors, sufferings, and triumphs of apostles, martyrs, and good and great men in successive ages, Christianity has become the professed and honored religion of the most civilized nations, and its preachers are exposed to very different temptations from those of savage persecution. Still our text has an application to the present time. We see our Saviour commanding his Apostles, to regard in their ministry the circumstances of the age in which they lived. Surrounded with foes, they were to exercise the wisdom or prudence of which the serpent was in ancient times the emblem, and to join with it the innocence and mildness of the dove. And, in like manner, the Christian minister is at all periods to regard the signs, the distinctive marks and character of the age to which he belongs, and must accommodate his ministry to its wants and demands. Accordingly, I propose to consider some of the leading traits of the present age, and the influence which they should have on a Christian teacher.

I. The state of the world, compared with the past, may be called enlightened, and requires an enlightened ministry. It hardly seems necessary to prove, that religion should be dispensed by men who at least keep pace with the intellect of the age in which they live. Some passages of Scripture, however, have been wrested to prove, that an unlearned ministry is that which God particularly honors. He always chooses, we are told,

"the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." But texts of this description are misunderstood, through the very ignorance which they are adduced to support. The wise, who are spoken of contemptuously in the New Testament, were not really enlightened men, but pretenders to wisdom, who substituted dreams of imagination and wild hypotheses for sober inquiry into God's works, and who knew comparatively nothing of nature or the human mind. The present age has a quite different illumination from that in which ancient philosophy prided itself. It is marked by great and obvious improvements in the methods of reasoning and inquiry, and by the consequent discovery and diffusion of a great mass of physical and moral truth, wholly unknown in the time of Christ. Now we affirm, that such an age demands an enlightened ministry. We want teachers, who will be able to discern and unfold the consistency of revealed religion with the new lights which are breaking in from nature; and who will be able to draw, from all men's discoveries in the outward world and in their own souls, illustrations, analogies, and arguments for Christianity. We have reason to believe, that God, the author of nature and revelation, has established a harmony between them, and that their beams are intended to mingle and shed a joint radiance; and, consequently, other things being equal, that teacher is best fitted to dispense Christianity, whose compass of mind enables him to compare what God is teaching in his Works and in his Word, and to present the truths of religion with those modifications and restraints which other acknowledged truths require. Christianity now needs dispensers, who will make history, nature, and the improvements of society, tributary to its elucidation

and support; who will show its adaptation to man as an ever progressive being; who will be able to meet the objections to its truth, which will naturally be started in an active, stirring, inquiring age; and, though last not least, who will have enough of mental and moral courage to detect and renounce the errors in the Church, on which such objections are generally built. In such an age, a ministry is wanted, which will furnish discussions of religious topics, not inferior at least in intelligence to those which people are accustomed to read and hear on other subjects. Christianity will suffer, if at a time when vigor and acuteness of thinking are carried into all other departments, the pulpit should send forth nothing but wild declamation, positive assertion, or dull commonplaces, with which even childhood is satiated. Religion must be seen to be the friend and quickener of intellect. It must be exhibited with clearness of reasoning and variety of illustration; nor ought it to be deprived of the benefits of a pure and felicitous diction and of rich and glowing imagery, where these gifts fall to the lot of the teacher. It is not meant that every minister must be a man of genius; for genius is one of God's rarest inspirations; and of all the breathings of genius, perhaps the rarest is eloquence. I mean only to say, that the age demands of those, who devote themselves to the administration of Christianity, that they should feel themselves called upon for the highest cultivation and fullest developement of the intellectual nature. Instead of thinking, that the ministry is a refuge for dulness, and that whoever can escape from the plough is fit for God's spiritual husbandry, we ought to feel that no profession demands more enlarged thinking and more various acquisitions of truth.

not know, that the sublimest doctrines lose in some hands all their grandeur, and the loveliest all their attractiveness? Who does not know, how much the diffusion and power of any system, whether physical, moral, or political, depend on the order according to which it is arranged, on the broad and consistent views which are given of it, on the connexions which it is shown to hold with other truths, on the analogies by which it is illustrated, adorned, and enforced, and, though last not least, on the clearness and energy of the style in which it is conveyed? "Nothing is needed in religion," some say, "but the naked truth." But I apprehend that there is no such thing as naked truth, at least as far as moral subjects are concerned. Truth which relates to God, and duty, and happiness, and a future state, is always humanized, if I may so use the word, by passing through a human mind; and, when communicated powerfully, it always comes to us in drapery thrown round it by the imagination, reason, and moral feelings of the teacher. It comes to us warm and living with the impressions and affections which it has produced in the soul from which it issues; and it ought so to come; for the highest evidence of moral truth is found in the moral principles and feelings of our nature, and therefore it fails of its best support, unless it is seen to accord with and to act upon these. The evidence of Christianity, which operates most universally, is not history nor miracles, but its correspondence to the noblest capacities, deepest wants, and purest aspirations of our nature, to the cravings of an immortal spirit; and when it comes to us from a mind, in which it has discovered nothing of this adaptation, and has touched none of these springs, it wants one

of its chief signatures of divinity. Christianity is not, then, to be exhibited nakedly. It owes much of its power to the mind which communicates it; and the greater the enlargement and developement of the mind of which it has possessed itself, and from which it flows, the wider and deeper will be its action on other souls.

It may be said, without censoriousness, that the ordinary mode, in which Christianity has been exhibited in past times, does not suit the illumination of the present. That mode has been too narrow, technical, pedantic. Religion has been made a separate business, and a dull, unsocial, melancholy business, too, instead of being manifested as a truth which bears on and touches every thing human, as a universal spirit, which ought to breathe through and modify all our desires and pursuits, all our trains of thought and emotion. And this narrow, forbidden mode of exhibiting Christianity, is easily explained by its early history. Monks shut up in cells; a priesthood cut off by celibacy from the sympathies and most interesting relations of life; and universities enslaved to a scholastic logic, and taught to place wisdom in verbal subtilties and unintelligible definitions; these took Christianity into their keeping; and at their chilling touch, this generous religion, so full of life and affection, became a dry, frigid, abstract system. Christianity, as it came from their hands, and has been transmitted by a majority of Protestant divines, reminds us of the human form, compressed by swathing-bands, until every joint is rigid, every movement constrained, and almost all the beauty and grace of nature obliterated. Instead of regarding it as a heavenly institution, designed to perfect our whole nature, to offer awakening

and purifying objects to the intellect, imagination, and heart, to develope every capacity of devout and social feeling, to form a rich, various, generous virtue, divines have cramped and tortured the Gospel into various systems, composed in the main of theological riddles and contradictions; and this religion of love has been made to inculcate a monkish and dark-visaged piety, very hostile to the free expansion and full enjoyment of all our faculties and social affections. Great improvements indeed in this particular are taking place among Christians of almost every denomination. Religion has been brought from the cell of the monk, and the school of the verbal disputant, into life and society; and its connexions with all our pursuits and feelings have been made manifest. Still, Christianity, I apprehend, is not viewed in sufficiently broad lights to meet the spirit of an age, which is tracing connexions between all objects of thought and branches of knowledge, and which cannot but distrust an alleged revelation, in as far as it is seen to want harmonies and affinities with other parts of God's system, and especially with human nature and human life.

II. The age in which we live demands not only an enlightened but an earnest ministry, for it is an age of earnestness and excitement. Men feel and think at present with more energy than formerly. There is more of interest and fervor. We learn now from experience what might have been inferred from the purposes of our Creator, that civilization and refinement are not, as has been sometimes thought, inconsistent with sensibility; that the intellect may grow without exhausting or overshadowing the heart. The human

mind was never more in earnest than at the present moment. The political revolutions, which form such broad features and distinctions of our age, have sprung from a new and deep working in the human soul. Men have caught glimpses, however indistinct, of the worth, dignity, rights, and great interests of their nature; and a thirst for untried good, and impatience of long endured wrongs, have broken out wildly, like the fires of Etna, and shaken and convulsed the earth. It is impossible not to discern this increased fervor of mind in every department of life. A new spirit of improvement is abroad. The imagination can no longer be confined to the acquisitions of past ages, but is kindling the passions by vague but noble ideas of blessings never yet attained. Multitudes, unwilling to wait the slow pace of that great innovator, time, are taking the work of reform into their own hands. Accordingly, the reverence for antiquity and for age-hallowed establishments, and the passion for change and amelioration, are now arrayed against each other in open hostility, and all great questions, affecting human happiness, are debated with the eagerness of party. The character of the age is stamped very strongly on its literary productions. Who, that can compare the present with the past, is not struck with the bold and earnest spirit of the literature of our times. It refuses to waste itself on trifles, or to minister to mere gratification. Almost all that is written has now some bearing on great interests of human nature. Fiction is no longer a mere amusement; but transcendent genius, accommodating itself to the character of the age, has seized upon this province of literature, and turned fiction from a toy into a mighty engine, and, under the light tale, is breathing through

the community either its reverence for the old or its thirst for the new, communicates the spirit and lessons of history, unfolds the operations of religious and civil institutions, and defends or assails new theories of education or morals by exhibiting them in life and action. The poetry of the age is equally characteristic. It has a deeper and more impressive tone than comes to us from what has been called the Augustan age of English literature. The regular, elaborate, harmonious strains, which delighted a former generation, are now accused, I say not how justly, of playing too much on the surface of nature and of the heart. Men want and demand a more thrilling note, a poetry which pierces beneath the exterior of life to the depths of the soul, and which lays open its mysterious workings, borrowing from the whole outward creation fresh images and correspondences, with which to illuminate the secrets of the world within us. So keen is this appetite, that extravagances of imagination, and gross violations both of taste and moral sentiment, are forgiven, when conjoined with what awakens strong emotion; and unhappily the most stirring is the most popular poetry, even though it issue from the desolate soul of a misanthrope and a libertine, and exhale poison and death.

Now, religion ought to be dispensed in accommodation to this spirit and character of our age. Men desire excitement, and religion must be communicated in a more exciting form. It must be seen not only to correspond and to be adapted to the intellect, but to furnish nutriment and appeals to the highest and profoundest sentiments of our nature. It must not be exhibited in the dry, pedantic devisions of a scholastic theology; nor must it be set forth and tricked out in the light drapery

of an artificial rhetoric, in prettinesses of style, in measured sentences, with an insipid floridness, and in the form of elegantly feeble essays. No; it must come from the soul in the language of earnest conviction and strong feeling. Men will not now be trifled with. They listen impatiently to great subjects treated with apathy. They want a religion which will take a strong hold upon them; and no system, I am sure, can now maintain its ground, which wants the power of awakening real and deep interest in the soul. It is objected to Unitarian Christianity, that it does not possess this heart-stirring energy; and if so, it will, and still more, it ought to fall; for it does not suit the spirit of our times, nor the essential and abiding spirit of human nature. Men will prefer even a fanaticism which is in earnest, to a pretended rationality, which leaves untouched all the great springs of the soul, which never lays a quickening hand on our love and veneration, our awe and fear, our hope and joy.

It is obvious, I think, that the spirit of the age, which demands a more exciting administration of Christianity, begins to be understood and is responded to by preachers. Those of us, whose memory extends back but a little way, can see a revolution taking place in this country. "The repose of the pulpit" has been disturbed. In England, the Established Church gives broad symptoms of awaking; and the slumbering incumbents of a state religion, either roused by sympathy, or aware of the necessity of self-defence, are beginning to exhibit the energy of the freer and more zealous sects around them.

In such an age, earnestness should characterize the ministry; and by this I mean, not a louder voice or a

more vehement gesture; I mean no tricks of oratory but a solemn conviction that religion is a great concern, and a solemn purpose that its claims shall be felt by others. To suit such an age, a minister must communicate religion, not only as a result of reasoning, but as a matter of experience, with that inexpressible character of reality, that life and power, which accompany truths drawn from a man's own soul. We ought to speak of religion as something which we ourselves know. Its influences, struggles, joys, sorrows, triumphs, should be delineated from our own history. The life and sensibility which we would spread, should be strong in our own breasts. This is the only genuine, unfailing spring of an earnest ministry. Men may work themselves for a time into a fervor by artificial means; but the flame is unsteady, "a crackling of thorns" on a cold hearth; and, after all, it is hard for the most successful art to give, even for a time, that soul-subduing tone to the voice, that air of native feeling to the countenance, and that raciness and freshness to the conceptions, which come from an experimental conviction of religious truth; and, accordingly, I would suggest, that the most important part of theological education, even in this enlightened age, is not the communication of knowledge, essential as that is, but the conversion and exaltation of religious knowledge into a living, practical, and soul-kindling conviction. Much as the age requires intellectual culture in a minister, it requires still more, that his acquisitions of truth should be instinct with life and feeling; that he should deliver his message, not mechanically and "in the line of his profession," but with the sincerity and earnestness of a man bent on great effects; that he should speak of

God, of Christ, of the dignity and loveliness of Christian virtue, of heaven and redemption, not as of traditions and historical records, about which he has only read, but as of realities which he understands and feels in the very depths of his soul.

III. The present is an age of free and earnest inquiry on the subject of religion, and, consequently, an age in which the extremes of skepticism and bigotry, and a multiplicity of sects, and a diversity of interpretations of the Sacred Volume, must be expected; and these circumstances of the times influence and modify the duties of the ministry. Free inquiry cannot exist without generating a degree of skepticism; and against this influence, more disastrous than any error of any sect, a minister is bound to erect every barrier. The human mind, by a natural reaction, is undoubtedly tending, after its long vassalage, to licentious speculation. Men have begun to send keen, searching glances into old institutions, whether of religion, literature, or policy; and have detected so many abuses, that a suspicion of what is old has in many cases taken place of the veneration for antiquity. In such an age, Christianity must be subjected to a rigid scrutiny. Church establishments and state patronage cannot screen it from investigation; and its ministers, far from being called to remove it from the bar of reason, where God has chosen that it should appear, are only bound to see that its claims be fairly and fully made known; and to this they are solemnly bound; and, consequently, it is one of their first duties to search deeply and understand thoroughly the true foundations and evidences, on which the religion stands. Now it seems to me, that just in proportion as

the human mind makes progress, the inward evidences of Christianity, the marks of divinity which it wears on its own brow, are becoming more and more important. I refer to the evidences which are drawn from its excellence, purity, and happy influences; from its adaptation to the spiritual wants, to the weakness and the greatness of human nature; from the original and unborrowed character, the greatness of soul, and the celestial loveliness of its Founder; from its unbounded benevolence, corresponding with the spirit of the universe; and from its views of God's parental character and purposes, of human duty and perfection, and of a future state; views manifestly tending to the exaltation and perpetual improvement of our nature, yet wholly opposed to the character of the age in which they were unfolded. The historical and miraculous proofs of Christianity are indeed essential and impregnable; but, without superseding these, the inward proofs, of which I speak, are becoming more and more necessary, and exert a greater power, in proportion as the moral discernment and sensibilities of men are strengthened and enlarged. And, if this be true, then Christianity is endangered, and skepticism fortified, by nothing so much as by representations of the religion, which sully its native lustre and darken its inward signatures of a heavenly origin; and, accordingly, the first and most solemn duty of its ministers is, to resue it from such perversions; to see that it be not condemned for doctrines for which it is in no respect responsible; and to vindicate its character as eminently a rational religion, that is, a religion consistent with itself, with the great principles of human nature, with God's acknowledged attributes, and with those indestructible convictions, which spring

almost instinctively from our moral constitution, and which grow stronger and stronger as the human mind is developed. A professed revelation, carrying contradiction on its front, and wounding those sentiments of justice and goodness, which are the highest tests of moral truth, cannot stand; and those who thus exhibit Christianity, however pure their aim, are shaking its foundations more deeply than its open and inveterate foes.

But free inquiry not only generates occasional skepticism, but much more a diversity of opinion among the believers of Christianity; and to this the ministry must have a special adaptation. In such an age, the ministry must in a measure be controversial. In particular, a minister, who after serious investigation attaches himself to that class of Christians, to which we of this religious society are known to belong, cannot but feel that the painful office of conflict with other denominations is laid upon him; for, whilst we deny the Christian name to none who acknowledge Jesus as their Saviour and Lord, we do deliberately believe, that, by many who confess him, his religion is mournfully disfigured. We believe, that piety at present is robbed in no small degree of its singleness, energy, and happiness, by the multiplication in the church of objects of supreme worship; by the division of the One God into three persons, who sustain different relations to mankind; and, above all, by the dishonorable views formed of the moral character and administration of the Deity. Errors relating to God seem to us among the most pernicious that can grow up among Christians; for they darken, and, in the strong language of Scripture, "turn into blood," the Sun of the Spiritual Universe.

Around just views of the Divine character all truths and all virtues naturally gather; and although some minds of native irrepressible vigor may rise to greatness, in spite of dishonorable conceptions of God, yet, as a general rule, human nature cannot spread to its just and full proportions under their appalling, enslaving, heart-withering control. We discover very plainly, as we think, in the frequent torpor of the conscience and heart in regard to religious obligation, the melancholy influences of that system, so prevalent among us, which robs our heavenly Father of his parental attributes. Indeed it seems impossible for the conscience, under such injurious representations of the Divine character, to discharge intelligently its solemn office of enforcing love to God as man's highest duty; and, accordingly, when religious excitements take place under this gloomy system, they bear the marks of a morbid action, much more than of a healthy, restorative process of the moral nature.

These errors a minister of liberal views of Christianity will feel himself bound to withstand. But let me not be understood, as if I would have the ministry given chiefly to controversy, and would turn the pulpit into a battery for the perpetual assault of adverse sects. O, no. Other strains than those of warfare should predominate in this sacred place. A minister may be faithful to truth, without brandishing perpetually the weapons of controversy. Occasional discussions of disputed doctrines are indeed demanded by the zeal with which error is maintained. But it becomes the preacher to remember, that there is a silent, indirect influence, more sure and powerful than direct assault on false opinions. The most effectual method of expelling error,

is, not to meet it sword in hand, but gradually to instil great truths, with which it cannot easily coexist, and by which the mind outgrows it. Men who have been recovered from false systems, will generally tell you, that the first step of their deliverance was the admission of some principle which seemed not to menace their past opinions, but which prepared the mind for the entrance of another and another truth, until they were brought, almost without suspecting it, to look on almost every doctrine of religion with other eyes, and in another and more generous light. The old superstitions about ghosts and dreams were not expelled by argument, for hardly a book was written against them; but men gradually outgrew them; and the spectres, which had haunted the terror-stricken soul for ages, fled before an improved philosophy, just as they were supposed to vanish before the rising sun. And, in the same manner, the errors which disfigure Christianity, and from which no creed is free, are to yield to the growth of the human mind. Instead of spending his strength in tracking and refuting error, let the minister, who would serve the cause of truth, labor to gain and diffuse more and more enlarged and lofty views of our religion, of its nature, spirit, and end. Let him labor to separate what is of universal and everlasting application, from the local and the temporary; to penetrate beneath the letter to the spirit; to detach the primary, essential, and all-comprehending principles of Christianity from the incrustations, accidental associations, and subordinate appendages by which they are often obscured; and to fix and establish these in men's minds as the standard by which more partial views are to be tried. Let him especially set forth the great moral purpose of

Christianity, always teaching, that Christ came to deliver from the power still more than from the punishment of sin; that his most important operation is within us; and that the highest end of his mission is, the erection of God's throne in the soul, the inspiration of a fervent filial piety, a piety founded in confiding views of God's parental character, and manifested in a charity corresponding to God's unbounded and ever-active love. In addition to these efforts, let him strive to communicate the just principles of interpreting the Scriptures, that men, reading them more intelligently, may read them with new interest, and he will have discharged his chief duty in relation to controversy.

It is an interesting thought, that, through the influences now described, a sensible progress is taking place in men's conceptions of Christianity. It is a plain matter of fact, that the hard features of that religious system, which has been "received by tradition from our fathers," are greatly softened; and that a necessity is felt by those who hold it, of accommodating their representations of it more and more to the improved philosophy of the human mind, and to the undeniable principles of natural and revealed religion. Unconditional Election is seldom heard of among us. The Imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, is hastening to join the exploded doctrine of Transubstantiation. The more revolting representations of man's state by nature, are judiciously kept out of sight; and, what is of still greater importance, preaching is incomparably more practical than formerly. And all these changes are owing, not to theological controversy so much as to the general progress of the human mind. This progress is especially discernible in the diminished importance now as-

cribed to the outward parts of Christianity. Christians, having grown up to understand that their religion is a spirit and not a form, are beginning to feel the puerility as well as guilt of breaking Christ's followers into factions, on such questions as these, How much a Bishop differs from a Presbyter? and, How great a quantity of water should be used in baptism? And, whilst they desire to ascertain the truth in these particulars, they look back on the uncharitable heat with which these and similar topics were once discussed, with something of the wonder which they feel, on recollecting the violence of the Papists during the memorable debate, Whether the Virgin Mary were born with original sin? It is a consoling and delightful thought, that God, who uses Christianity to advance civilization and knowledge, makes use of this very advancement to bring back Christianity to a purer state, thus binding together, and carrying forward by mutual action, the cause of knowledge and the cause of religion, and strengthening perpetually their blended and blessed influences on human nature.

IV. The age is in many respects a corrupt one, and needs and demands in the ministry a spirit of reform. The age, I say, is corrupt; not because I consider it as falling below the purity of past times, but because it is obviously and grossly defective, when measured by the Christian standard, and by the lights and advantages which it enjoys. I know nothing to justify the cry of modern degeneracy, but rather incline to the belief, that here at least the sense of religion was never stronger than at present. In comparing different periods as to virtue and piety, regard must be had to difference of circumstances. It would argue little wisdom

or candor, to expect the same freedom from luxury and dissipation in this opulent and flourishing community, as marked the first settlement of our country, when the inhabitants, scarcely sheltered from the elements, and almost wholly cut off from intercourse with the civilized word, could command little more than the necessaries of life; and yet it is through superficial comparisons in such particulars, that the past is often magnified at the expense of the present. I mean not to strike a balance between this age and former ones. I look on this age in the light of Christianity, as a minister ought to look upon it; and whilst I see much to cheer and encourage, I see much to make a good man mourn, and to stir up Christ's servants to prayer and toil. That our increased comforts, improved arts, and overflowing prosperity are often abused to licentiousness; that Christianity is with multitudes a mere name and form; that a practical atheism, which ascribes to nature and fortune the gifts and operations of God, and a practical infidelity, which lives and cares and provides only for the present state, abound on every side of us; that much which is called morality, springs from a prudent balancing of the passions, and a discreet regard to worldly interests; that there is an insensibility to God, which, if our own hearts were not infected by it, would shock and amaze us; that education, instead of guarding and rearing the moral and religious nature as its supreme care, often betrays and sacrifices it to accomplishments and acquisitions which relate only to the present life; that there is a mournful prevalence of dissoluteness among the young, and of intemperance among the poor; that the very religion of peace is made a torch of discord; and that the fires of uncharitableness

and bigotry, fires kindled from hell, often burn on altars consecrated to the true God;—that such evils exist, who does not know? What Christian can look round him and say, that the state of society corresponds to what men may and should be, under the light of the Gospel, and in an age of advanced intelligence? As for that man, who, on surveying the world, thinks its condition almost as healthy as can be desired or hoped; who sees but a few superficial blots on the general aspect of society; who thinks the ministry established for no higher end, than to perpetuate the present state of morals and religion; whose heart is never burdened and sorrow-smitten by the fearful doom to which multitudes around him are thoughtlessly hastening;—O, let not that man take on him the care of souls. The physician, who should enter an hospital to congratulate his dying patients on their pleasant sensations, and rapid convalescence, would be as faithful to his trust as the minister who sees no deep moral maladies around him. No man is fitted to withstand great evils with energy, unless he be impressed by their greatness. No man is fitted to enter upon that warfare with moral evil, to which the ministry is set apart, who is not pained and pierced by its extent and woes; who does not burn to witness and advance a great moral revolution in the world.

Am I told, that "romantic expectations of great changes in society will do more harm than good; that the world will move along in its present course, let the ministry do what it may; that we must take the present state as God has made it, and not waste our strength in useless lamentation for incurable evils." I hold this language, though it takes the name of philosophy, to be wholly unwarranted by experience and revelation. If

there be one striking feature in human nature, it is its susceptibleness of improvement; and who is authorized to say, that the limit of Christian improvement is reached? that, whilst science and art, intellect and imagination, are extending their domains, the conscience and affections, the moral and religious principles of our nature, are incapable of increased power and elevation? Have we not pledges, in man's admiration of disinterested, heroic love; in his power of conceiving and thirsting for unattained heights of excellence; and in the splendor and sublimity of virtue already manifested in not a few who "shine as lights" in the darkness of past ages, that man was created for perpetual moral and religious progress? True, the minister should not yield himself to romantic anticipations; for disappointment may deject him. Let him not expect to break in a moment chains of habit, which years have riveted, or to bring back to immediate intimacy with God souls which have wandered long and far from him. This is romance; but there is something to be dreaded by the minister more than this; I mean, that frigid tameness of mind, too common in Christian teachers, which confounds the actual and the possible; which cannot burst the shackles of custom; which never kindles at the thought of great improvements of human nature; which is satisfied if religion receive an outward respect, and never dreams of enthroning it in men's souls; which looks on the strongholds of sin with despair; which utters by rote the solemn and magnificent language of the Gospel, without expecting it to "work mightily"; which sees in the ministry a part of the mechanism of society, a useful guardian of public order, but never suspects the powers with which it is armed by Christianity.

The ministry is indeed armed with great powers for great effects. The doctrines which Christianity commits to its teachers, are mighty engines. The perfect character of God; the tender and solemn attributes, which belong to him as our Father and Judge; his purposes of infinite and everlasting mercy towards the human race; the character and history of Christ; his entire, self-immolating devotion to the cause of mankind; his intimate union with his followers; his sufferings, and cross, his resurrection, ascension, and intercession; the promised aids of the Holy Spirit; the immortality of man; the retributions which await the unrepenting, and the felicities and glories of heaven, — here are truths, able to move the whole soul and to war victoriously with its host of passions. The teacher, to whom are committed the infinite realities of the spiritual world, the sanctions of eternity, "the powers of the life to come," has instruments to work with, which turn to feebleness all other means of influence. There is not heard on earth a voice so powerful, so penetrating, as that of an enlightened minister, who, under the absorbing influence of these mighty truths, devotes himself a living sacrifice, a whole burnt-offering, to the cause of enlightening and saving his fellow-creatures.

No; there is no romance in a minister's proposing, and hoping to forward, a great moral revolution on the earth; for the religion, which he is appointed to preach, was intended and is adapted to work deeply and widely, and to change the face of society. Christianity was not ushered into the world with such a stupendous preparation; it was not foreshown through so many ages by enraptured prophets; it was not proclaimed so joyfully by the songs of angels; it was not preached by such

holy lips and sealed by such precious blood, to be only a pageant, a form, a sound, a show. O, no. It has come from heaven, with heaven's life and power, — come to "make all things new," to make "the wilderness glad and the desert blossom as the rose," to break the stony heart, to set free the guilt-burdened and earth-bound spirit, and to "present it faultless before God's glory with exceeding joy." With courage and hope becoming such a religion, let the minister bring to his work the concentrated powers of intellect and affection, and God, in whose cause he labors, will accompany and crown the labor with an almighty blessing.

My brother, you are now to be set apart to the Christian ministry. I bid you welcome to its duties, and implore for you strength to discharge them, a long and prosperous course, increasing success, and everlasting rewards. I also welcome you to the connexion which is this day formed between you and myself. I thank God for an associate, in whose virtues and endowments I have the promise of personal comfort and relief, and, still more, the pledges of usefulness to this people. I have lived too long, to expect unmingled good in this or in any relation of life; nor am I ignorant of the difficulties and trials, which are thought to attend the union of different minds and different hands in the care of the same church. God grant us that singleness of purpose, that sincere concern for the salvation of our hearers, which will make the success of each the happiness of both. I know, for I have borne, the anxieties and sufferings which belong to the first years of the Christian ministry, and I beg you to avail yourself of whatever aid my experience can give you. But no human aid

can lift every burden from your mind; nor would the truest kindness desire for you exemption from the universal lot. May the discipline, which awaits you, give purity and loftiness to your motives; give energy and tenderness to your character, and prepare you to minister to the wants of a tempted and afflicted world, with that sympathy and wisdom, which fellowship in suffering can alone bestow. May you grow in grace, and in the spirit of the ministry, as you grow in years; and, when the voice which now speaks to you shall cease to be heard within these walls, may you, my brother, be left to enjoy and reward the confidence, to point out the path and the perils, to fortify the virtues, to animate the piety, to comfort the sorrows, to save the souls of this much loved people.

Brethren of this Christian Society! I rejoice in the proof, which this day affords, of your desire to secure the administration of Christ's word and ordinances to yourselves and your children; and I congratulate you on the prospects which it opens before you. The recollections, which rush upon my mind, of your sympathy and uninterrupted kindness through the vicissitudes of my health and the frequent suspensions of my labors, encourage me to anticipate for my young brother that kindness and candor, on which the happiness of a minister so much depends. I cannot ask for him sincerer attachment, than it has been my lot to enjoy. I remember, however, that the reciprocation of kind feelings is not the highest end of the ministry; and, accordingly, my most earnest desire and prayer to God is, that, with a new pastor, he may send you new influences of his spirit, and that, through our joint labors, Christianity,

being rooted in your understandings and hearts, may spring up into a rich harvest of universal goodness. May a more earnest concern for salvation, and a thirst for more generous improvement, be excited in your breasts. May a new life breathe through the worship of this house, and a new love join the hearts of the worshippers. May our ministry produce everlasting fruits; and on that great day, which will summon the teacher and the taught before the judgment-seat of Christ, may you, my much loved and respected people, be "our joy and crown"; and may we, when all hearts shall be revealed, be seen to have sought your good with unfeigned and disinterested love!

UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY

MOST FAVORABLE TO PIETY.

DISCOURSE

AT THE

DEDICATION OF THE SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UNITARIAN CHURCH.

NEW YORK, 1826.

MARK xii. 29, 30: "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment."

WE have assembled to dedicate this building to the worship of the only living and true God, and to the teaching of the religion of his son, Jesus Christ. By this act we do not expect to confer on this spot of ground and these walls any peculiar sanctity or any mysterious properties. We do not suppose, that, in consequence of rites now performed, the worship offered here will be more acceptable than prayer uttered in the closet, or breathed from the soul in the midst of business; or that the instructions delivered from this pulpit will be more effectual, than if they were uttered in a private dwelling or the open air. By dedication we understand

only a solemn expression of the purpose for which this building is reared, joined with prayer to Him, who alone can crown our enterprise with success, that our design may be accepted and fulfilled. For this religious act, we find indeed no precept in the New Testament, and on this account some have scrupled as to its propriety. But we are not among those who consider the written Word as a statute-book, by the letter of which every step in life must be governed. We believe, on the other hand, that one of the great excellences of Christianity is, that it does not deal in minute regulation, but that, having given broad views of duty, and enjoined a pure and disinterested spirit, it leaves us to apply these rules and express this spirit according to the promptings of the divine monitor within us, and according to the claims and exigencies of the ever varying conditions in which we are placed. We believe, too, that revelation is not intended to supersede God's other modes of instruction; that it is not intended to drown, but to make more audible, the voice of nature. Now, nature dictates the propriety of such an act as we are this day assembled to perform. Nature has always taught men, on the completion of an important structure, designed for public and lasting good, to solemnize its first appropriation to the purpose for which it was reared, by some special service. To us there is a sacredness in this moral instinct, in this law written on the heart; and in listening reverently to God's dictates, however conveyed, we doubt not that we shall enjoy his acceptance and blessing.

I have said, we dedicate this building to the teaching of the Gospel of Christ. But in the present state of the Christian church, these words are not as definite as

they one day will be. This Gospel is variously interpreted. It is preached in various forms. Christendom is parcelled out into various sects. When, therefore, we see a new house of worship reared, the question immediately arises, To what mode of teaching Christianity is it to be devoted? I need not tell you, my hearers, that this house has been built by that class of Christians, who are called Unitarians, and that the Gospel will here be taught, as interpreted by that body of believers. This you all know; but perhaps all present have not attached a very precise meaning to the word, by which our particular views of Christianity are designated. Unitarianism has been made a term of so much reproach, and has been uttered in so many tones of alarm, horror, indignation, and scorn, that to many it gives only a vague impression of something monstrous, impious, unutterably perilous. To such, I would say, that this doctrine, which is considered by some as the last and most perfect invention of Satan, the consummation of his blasphemies, the most cunning weapon ever forged in the fires of hell, amounts to this, — That there is One God, even the Father; and that Jesus Christ is not this One God, but his son and messenger, who derived all his powers and glories from the Universal Parent, and who came into the world not to claim supreme homage for himself, but to carry up the soul to his Father as the Only Divine Person, the Only Ultimate Object of religious worship. To us, this doctrine seems not to have sprung from hell, but to have descended from the throne of God, and to invite and attract us thither. To us it seems to come from the Scriptures, with a voice loud as the sound of many waters, and as articulate and clear as if Jesus, in a

bodily form, were pronouncing it distinctly in our ears. To this doctrine, and to Christianity interpreted in consistency with it, we dedicate this building.

That we desire to propagate this doctrine, we do not conceal. It is a treasure, which we wish not to confine to ourselves, which we dare not lock up in our own breasts. We regard it as given to us for others, as well as for ourselves. We should rejoice to spread it through this great city, to carry it into every dwelling, and to send it far and wide to the remotest settlements of our country. Am I asked, why we wish this diffusion? We dare not say, that we are in no degree influenced by sectarian feeling; for we see it raging around us, and we should be more than men, were we wholly to escape an epidemic passion. We do hope, however, that our main purpose and aim is not sectarian, but to promote a purer and nobler piety than now prevails. We are not induced to spread our opinions by the mere conviction that they are true; for there are many truths, historical, metaphysical, scientific, literary, which we have no anxiety to propagate. We regard them as the highest, most important, most efficient truths, and therefore demanding a firm testimony, and earnest efforts to make them known. In thus speaking, we do not mean, that we regard our peculiar views as essential to salvation. Far from us be this spirit of exclusion, the very spirit of antichrist, the worst of all the delusions of Popery and of Protestantism. We hold nothing to be essential, but the simple and supreme dedication of the mind, heart, and life to God and to his will. This inward and practical devotedness to the Supreme Being, we are assured, is attained and accepted under all the forms of Christianity. We believe, however, that it is favored

by that truth which we maintain, as by no other system of faith. We regard Unitarianism as peculiarly the friend of inward, living, practical religion. For this we value it. For this we would spread it; and we desire none to embrace it, but such as shall seek and derive from it this celestial influence.

This character and property of Unitarian Christianity, its fitness to promote true, deep, and living piety, being our chief ground of attachment to it, and our chief motive for dedicating this house to its inculcation, I have thought proper to make this the topic of my present discourse. I do not propose to prove the truth of Unitarianism by Scriptural authorities, for this argument would exceed the limits of a sermon, but to show its superior tendency to form an elevated religious character. If, however, this position can be sustained, I shall have contributed no weak argument in support of the truth of our views; for the chief purpose of Christianity undoubtedly is, to promote piety, to bring us to God, to fill our souls with that Great Being, to make us alive to him; and a religious system can carry no more authentic mark of a divine original, than its obvious, direct, and peculiar adaptation to quicken and raise the mind to its Creator. — In speaking thus of Unitarian Christianity as promoting piety, I ought to observe, that I use this word in its proper and highest sense. I mean not every thing which bears the name of piety, for under this title superstition, fanaticism, and formality are walking abroad and claiming respect. I mean not an anxious frame of mind, not abject and slavish fear, not a dread of hell, not a repetition of forms, not church-going, not loud profession, not severe censure of others' irreligion; but filial love and reverence towards God, habitual grati-

tude, cheerful trust, ready obedience, and, though last not least, an imitation of the ever-active and unbounded benevolence of the Creator.

The object of this discourse requires me to speak with great freedom of different systems of religion. But let me not be misunderstood. Let not the uncharitableness, which I condemn, be lightly laid to my charge. Let it be remembered, that I speak only of systems, not of those who embrace them. In setting forth with all simplicity what seem to me the good or bad tendencies of doctrines, I have not a thought of giving standards or measures by which to estimate the virtue or vice of their professors. Nothing would be more unjust, than to decide on men's characters from their peculiarities of faith; and the reason is plain. Such peculiarities are not the only causes which impress and determine the mind. Our nature is exposed to innumerable other influences. If indeed a man were to know nothing but his creed, were to meet with no human beings but those who adopt it, were to see no example and to hear no conversation, but such as were formed by it; if his creed were to meet him everywhere, and to exclude every other object of thought; then his character might be expected to answer to it with great precision. But our Creator has not shut us up in so narrow a school. The mind is exposed to an infinite variety of influences, and these are multiplying with the progress of society. Education, friendship, neighbourhood, public opinion, the state of society, "the genius of the place" where we live, books, events, the pleasures and business of life, the outward creation, our physical temperament, and innumerable other causes, are perpetually pouring in upon the soul thoughts, views, and emotions; and these influ-

ences are so complicated, so peculiarly combined in the case of every individual, and so modified by the original susceptibilities and constitution of every mind, that on no subject is there greater uncertainty, than on the formation of character. To determine the precise operation of a religious opinion amidst this host of influences, surpasses human power. A great truth may be completely neutralized by the countless impressions and excitements, which the mind receives from other sources; and so a great error may be disarmed of much of its power, by the superior energy of other and better views, of early habits, and of virtuous examples. Nothing is more common than to see a doctrine believed without swaying the will. Its efficacy depends, not on the assent of the intellect, but on the place which it occupies in the thoughts, on the distinctness and vividness with which it is conceived, on its association with our common ideas, on its frequency of recurrence, and on its command of the attention, without which it has no life. Accordingly, pernicious opinions are not seldom held by men of the most illustrious virtue. I mean not, then, in commending or condemning systems, to pass sentence on their professors. I know the power of the mind to select from a multifarious system, for its habitual use, those features or principles which are generous, pure, and ennobling, and by these, to sustain its spiritual life amidst the nominal profession of many errors. I know that a creed is one thing, as written in a book, and another, as it exists in the minds of its advocates. In the book, all the doctrines appear in equally strong and legible lines. In the mind, many are faintly traced and seldom recurred to, whilst others are inscribed as with sunbeams, and are the chosen,

constant lights of the soul. Hence, in good men of opposing denominations, a real agreement may subsist as to their vital principles of faith; and amidst the division of tongues, there may be unity of soul, and the same internal worship of God. By these remarks, I do not mean that error is not evil, or that it bears no pernicious fruit. Its tendencies are always bad. But I mean, that these tendencies exert themselves amidst so many counteracting influences; and that injurious opinions so often lie dead, through the want of mixture with the common thoughts, through the mind's not absorbing them, and changing them into its own substance; that the highest respect may, and ought to be cherished for men, in whose creed we find much to disapprove. In this discourse I shall speak freely, and some may say severely, of Trinitarianism; but I love and honor not a few of its advocates; and in opposing what I deem their error, I would on no account detract from their worth. After these remarks, I hope that the language of earnest discussion and strong conviction will not be construed into the want of that charity, which I acknowledge as the first grace of our religion.

I now proceed to illustrate and prove the superiority of Unitarian Christianity, as a means of promoting a deep and noble piety.

I. Unitarianism is a system most favorable to piety, because it presents to the mind One, and only one, Infinite Person, to whom supreme homage is to be paid. It does not weaken the energy of religious sentiment by dividing it among various objects. It collects and concentrates the soul on One Father of unbounded, undivided, unrivalled glory. To Him it teaches the

mind to rise through all beings. Around Him it gathers all the splendors of the universe. To Him it teaches us to ascribe whatever good we receive or behold, the beauty and magnificence of nature, the liberal gifts of Providence, the capacities of the soul, the bonds of society, and especially the riches of grace and redemption, the mission, and powers, and beneficent influences of Jesus Christ. All happiness it traces up to the Father, as the sole source; and the mind, which these views have penetrated, through this intimate association of every thing exciting and exalting in the universe with One Infinite Parent, can and does offer itself up to him with the intensest and profoundest love, of which human nature is susceptible. The Trinitarian indeed professes to believe in one God, and means to hold fast this truth. But three persons, having distinctive qualities and relations, of whom one is sent and another the sender, one is given and another the giver, of whom one intercedes and another hears the intercession, of whom one takes flesh and another never becomes incarnate,—three persons, thus discriminated, are as truly three objects of the mind, as if they were acknowledged to be separate divinities; and, from the principles of our nature, they cannot act on the mind as deeply and powerfully as one Infinite Person, to whose sole goodness all happiness is ascribed. To multiply infinite objects for the heart, is to distract it. To scatter the attention among three equal persons, is to impair the power of each. The more strict and absolute the unity of God, the more easily and intimately all the impressions and emotions of piety flow together, and are condensed into one glowing thought, one thrilling love. No language can express the absorbing energy

of the thought of one Infinite Father. When vitally implanted in the soul, it grows and gains strength for ever. It enriches itself by every new view of God's word and works; gathers tribute from all regions and all ages; and attracts into itself all the rays of beauty, glory, and joy, in the material and spiritual creation.

My hearers, as you would feel the full influence of God upon your souls, guard sacredly, keep unobscured and unsullied, that fundamental and glorious truth, that there is One, and only One Almighty Agent in the universe, one Infinite Father. Let this truth dwell in me in its uncorrupted simplicity, and I have the spring and nutriment of an ever-growing piety. I have an object for my mind towards which all things bear me. I know whither to go in all trial, whom to bless in all joy, whom to adore in all I behold. But let three persons claim from me supreme homage, and claim it on different grounds, one for sending and another for coming to my relief, and I am divided, distracted, perplexed. My frail intellect is overborne. Instead of One Father, on whose arm I can rest, my mind is torn from object to object, and I tremble, lest among so many claimants of supreme love, I should withhold from one or another his due.

II. Unitarianism is the system most favorable to piety, because it holds forth and preserves inviolate the spirituality of God. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." It is of great importance to the progress and elevation of the religious principle, that we should refine more and more our conceptions of God; that we should separate from him all material properties, and whatever is limited or imperfect in our own nature; that we should

regard him as a pure intelligence, an unmixed and infinite Mind. When it pleased God to select the Jewish people and place them under miraculous interpositions, one of the first precepts given them was, that they should not represent God under any bodily form, any graven image, or the likeness of any creature. Next came Christianity, which had this as one of its great objects, to render religion still more spiritual, by abolishing the ceremonial and outward worship of former times, and by discarding those grosser modes of describing God, through which the ancient prophets had sought to impress an unrefined people.

Now, Unitarianism concurs with this sublime moral purpose of God. It asserts his spirituality. It approaches him under no bodily form, but as a pure spirit, as the infinite and the universal Mind. On the other hand, it is the direct influence of Trinitarianism to materialize men's conceptions of God ; and, in truth, this system is a relapse into the error of the rudest and earliest ages, into the worship of a corporeal God. Its leading feature is, the doctrine of a God clothed with a body, and acting and speaking through a material frame, — of the Infinite Divinity dying on a cross ; a doctrine, which in earthliness reminds us of the mythology of the rudest pagans, and which a pious Jew, in the twilight of the Mosaic religion, would have shrunk from with horror. It seems to me no small objection to the Trinity, that it supposes God to take a body in the later and more improved ages of the world, when it is plain, that such a manifestation, if needed at all, was peculiarly required in the infancy of the race. The effect of such a system in debasing the idea of God, in associating with the Divinity human passions and infirmities, is too obvious

to need much elucidation. On the supposition that the second person of the Trinity became incarnate, God may be said to be a material being, on the same general ground, on which this is affirmed of man; for man is material only by the union of the mind with the body; and the very meaning of incarnation is, that God took a body, through which he acted and spoke, as the human soul operates through its corporeal organs. Every bodily affection may thus be ascribed to God. Accordingly the Trinitarian, in his most solemn act of adoration, is heard to pray in these appalling words: "Good Lord, deliver us; by the mystery of thy holy incarnation, by thy holy nativity and circumcision, by thy baptism, fasting, and temptation, by thine agony and bloody sweat, by thy cross and passion, good Lord, deliver us." Now I ask you to judge, from the principles of human nature, whether to worshippers, who adore their God for his wounds and tears, his agony, and blood, and sweat, the ideas of corporeal existence and human suffering will not predominate over the conceptions of a purely spiritual essence; whether the mind, in clinging to the man, will not lose the God; whether a surer method for depressing and adulterating the pure thought of the Divinity could have been devised. That the Trinitarian is unconscious of this influence of his faith, I know, nor do I charge it on him as a crime. Still it exists, and cannot be too much deplored.

The Roman Catholics, true to human nature and their creed, have sought, by painting and statuary, to bring their imagined God before their eyes; and have thus obtained almost as vivid impressions of him, as if they had lived with him on the earth. The Protestant condemns them for using these similitudes and represen-

tations in their worship ; but, if a Trinitarian, he does so to his own condemnation. For if, as he believes, it was once a duty to bow in adoration before the living body of his incarnate God, what possible guilt can there be in worshipping before the pictured or sculptured memorial of the same being ? Christ's body may as truly be represented by the artist, as any other human form ; and its image may be used as effectually and properly, as that of an ancient sage or hero, to recall him with vividness to the mind. — Is it said, that God has expressly forbidden the use of images in our worship ? But why was that prohibition laid on the Jews ? For this express reason, that God had not presented himself to them in any form, which admitted of representation. Hear the language of Moses : " Take good heed lest ye make you a graven image, for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire." * If, since that period, God has taken a body, then the reason of the prohibition has ceased ; and if he took a body, among other purposes, that he might assist the weakness of the intellect, which needs a material form, then a statue, which lends so great an aid to the conception of an absent friend, is not only justified, but seems to be required.

This materializing and embodying of the Supreme Being, which is the essence of Trinitarianism, cannot but be adverse to a growing and exalted piety. Human and divine properties, being confounded in one being, lose their distinctness. The splendors of the Godhead are dimmed. The worshippers of an incarnate Deity, through the frailty of their nature, are strongly tempted

* Deut. iv. 15, 16. — The arrangement of the text is a little changed, to put the reader immediately in possession of the meaning.

to fasten chiefly on his human attributes; and their devotion, instead of rising to the Infinite God, and taking the peculiar character which infinity inspires, becomes rather a human affection, borrowing much of its fervor from the ideas of suffering, blood, and death. It is indeed possible, that this God-man (to use the strange phraseology of Trinitarians) may excite the mind more easily, than a purely spiritual divinity; just as a tragedy, addressed to the eye and ear, will interest the multitude more than the contemplation of the most exalted character. But the emotions, which are the most easily roused, are not the profoundest or most enduring. This human love, inspired by a human God, though at first more fervid, cannot grow and spread through the soul, like the reverential attachment, which an infinite, spiritual Father awakens. Refined conceptions of God, though more slowly attained, have a more quickening and all-pervading energy, and admit of perpetual accessions of brightness, life, and strength.

True, we shall be told, that Trinitarianism has converted only one of its three persons into a human Deity, and that the other two remain purely spiritual beings. But who does not know, that man will attach himself most strongly to the God who has become a man? Is not this even a duty, if the Divinity has taken a body to place himself within the reach of human comprehension and sympathy? That the Trinitarian's views of the Divinity will be colored more by his visible, tangible, corporeal God, than by those persons of the Trinity, who remain comparatively hidden in their invisible and spiritual essence, is so accordant with the principles of our nature, as to need no labored proof.

My friends, hold fast the doctrine of a purely spiritual

Divinity. It is one of the great supports and instruments of a vital piety. It brings God near, as no other doctrine can. One of the leading purposes of Christianity is, to give us an ever-growing sense of God's immediate presence, a consciousness of him in our souls. Now, just as far as corporeal or limited attributes enter into our conception of him, we remove him from us. He becomes an outward, distant being, instead of being viewed and felt as dwelling in the soul itself. It is an unspeakable benefit of the doctrine of a purely spiritual God, that he can be regarded as inhabiting, filling our spiritual nature; and, through this union with our minds, he can and does become the object of an intimacy and friendship, such as no embodied being can call forth.

III. Unitarianism is the system most favorable to piety, because it presents a distinct and intelligible object of worship, a being, whose nature, whilst inexpressibly sublime, is yet simple and suited to human apprehension. An infinite Father is the most exalted of all conceptions, and yet the least perplexing. It involves no incongruous ideas. It is illustrated by analogies from our own nature. It coincides with that fundamental law of the intellect, through which we demand a cause proportioned to effects. It is also as interesting as it is rational; so that it is peculiarly congenial with the improved mind. The sublime simplicity of God, as he is taught in Unitarianism, by relieving the understanding from perplexity, and by placing him within the reach of thought and affection, gives him peculiar power over the soul. Trinitarianism, on the other hand, is a riddle. Men call it a mystery; but it is mysterious, not like the great truths of religion, by its vastness and grandeur, but by the irreconcilable ideas which it involves. One God, con-

sisting of three persons or agents, is so strange a being, so unlike our own minds, and all others with which we hold intercourse, is so misty, so incongruous, so contradictory, that he cannot be apprehended with that distinctness and that feeling of reality, which belong to the opposite system. Such a heterogeneous being, who is at the same moment one and many; who includes in his own nature the relations of Father and Son, or, in other words, is Father and Son to himself; who, in one of his persons, is at the same moment the Supreme God and a mortal man, omniscient and ignorant, almighty and impotent; such a being is certainly the most puzzling and distracting object ever presented to human thought. Trinitarianism, instead of teaching an intelligible God, offers to the mind a strange compound of hostile attributes, bearing plain marks of those ages of darkness, when Christianity shed but a faint ray, and the diseased fancy teemed with prodigies and unnatural creations. In contemplating a being, who presents such different and inconsistent aspects, the mind finds nothing to rest upon; and, instead of receiving distinct and harmonious impressions, is disturbed by shifting, unsettled images. To commune with such a being must be as hard, as to converse with a man of three different countenances, speaking with three different tongues. The believer in this system must forget it, when he prays, or he could find no repose in devotion. Who can compare it, in distinctness, reality, and power, with the simple doctrine of One Infinite Father?

IV. Unitarianism promotes a fervent and enlightened piety, by asserting the absolute and unbounded perfection of God's character. This is the highest service which can be rendered to mankind. Just and generous

conceptions of the Divinity are the soul's true wealth. To spread these is to contribute more effectually, than by any other agency, to the progress and happiness of the intelligent creation. To obscure God's glory is to do greater wrong, than to blot out the sun. The character and influence of a religion must answer to the views which it gives of the Divinity; and there is a plain tendency in that system, which manifests the divine perfections most resplendently, to awaken the sublimest and most blessed piety.

Now, Trinitarianism has a fatal tendency to degrade the character of the Supreme Being, though its advocates, I am sure, intend no such wrong. By multiplying divine persons, it takes from each the glory of independent, all-sufficient, absolute perfection. This may be shown in various particulars. And in the first place, the very idea, that three persons in the Divinity are in any degree important, implies and involves the imperfection of each; for it is plain, that if one divine person possesses all possible power, wisdom, love, and happiness, nothing will be gained to himself or to the creation by joining with him two, or two hundred other persons. To say that he needs others for any purpose or in any degree, is to strip him of independent and all-sufficient majesty. If our Father in heaven, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not of himself sufficient to all the wants of his creation; if, by his union with other persons, he can accomplish any good to which he is not of himself equal; or if he thus acquires a claim to the least degree of trust or hope, to which he is not of himself entitled by his own independent attributes; then it is plain, he is not a being of infinite and absolute perfection. Now Trinitarianism

teaches, that the highest good accrues to the human race from the existence of three divine persons, sustaining different offices and relations to the world; and it regards the Unitarian, as subverting the foundation of human hope, by asserting that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus is alone and singly God. Thus it derogates from his infinite glory.

In the next place, Trinitarianism degrades the character of the Supreme Being, by laying its disciples under the necessity of making such a distribution of offices and relations among the three persons, as will serve to designate and distinguish them; for in this way it interferes with the sublime conceptions of One Infinite Person, in whom all glories are concentred. If we are required to worship three persons, we must view them in different lights, or they will be mere repetitions of each other, mere names and sounds, presenting no objects, conveying no meaning to the mind. Some appropriate character, some peculiar acts, feelings, and relations must be ascribed to each. In other words, the glory of all must be shorn, that some special distinguishing lustre may be thrown on each. Accordingly, creation is associated peculiarly with the conception of the Father; satisfaction for human guilt with that of the Son; whilst sanctification, the noblest work of all, is given to the Holy Spirit as his more particular work. By a still more fatal distribution, the work of justice, the office of vindicating the rights of the Divinity, falls peculiarly to the Father, whilst the loveliness of interposing mercy clothes peculiarly the person of the Son. By this unhappy influence of Trinitarianism, from which common minds at least cannot escape, the splendors of the Godhead, being scattered among

three objects, instead of being united in One Infinite Father, are dimmed; and he, whose mind is thoroughly and practically possessed by this system, can hardly conceive the effulgence of glory in which the One God offers himself to a pious believer in his strict unity.

But the worst has not been told. I observe, then, in the third place, that if Three Divine Persons are believed in, such an administration or government of the world must be ascribed to them, as will furnish them with a sphere of operation. No man will admit three persons into his creed, without finding a use for them. Now it is an obvious remark, that a system of the universe, which involves and demands more than one Infinite Agent, must be wild, extravagant, and unworthy the perfect God; because there is no possible or conceivable good, to which such an Agent is not adequate. Accordingly we find Trinitarianism connecting itself with a scheme of administration, exceedingly derogatory to the Divine character. It teaches, that the Infinite Father saw fit to put into the hands of our first parents the character and condition of their whole progeny; and that, through one act of disobedience, the whole race bring with them into being a corrupt nature, or are born depraved. It teaches, that the offences of a short life, though begun and spent under this disastrous influence, merit endless punishment, and that God's law threatens this infinite penalty; and that man is thus burdened with a guilt, which no sufferings of the created universe can expiate, which nothing but the sufferings of an Infinite Being can purge away. In this condition of human nature, Trinitarianism finds a sphere of action for its different persons. I am aware that some Trinitarians, on hearing this statement of their

system, may reproach me with ascribing to them the errors of Calvinism, a system which they abhor as much as ourselves. But none of the peculiarities of Calvinism enter into this exposition. I have given what I understand to be the leading features of Trinitarianism all the world over; and the benevolent professors of that faith, who recoil from this statement, must blame not the preacher, but the creeds and establishments by which these doctrines are diffused. For ourselves, we look with horror and grief on the views of God's government, which are naturally and intimately united with Trinitarianism. They take from us our Father in heaven, and substitute a stern and unjust lord. Our filial love and reverence rise up against them. We say to the Trinitarian, touch any thing but the perfections of God. Cast no stain on that spotless purity and loveliness. We can endure any errors but those, which subvert or unsettle the conviction of God's paternal goodness. Urge not upon us a system, which makes existence a curse, and wraps the universe in gloom. Leave us the cheerful light, the free and healthful atmosphere, of a liberal and rational faith; the ennobling and consoling influences of the doctrine, which nature and revelation in blessed concord teach us, of One Father of unbounded and inexhaustible love.

V. Unitarianism is peculiarly favorable to piety, because it accords with nature, with the world around and the world within us; and through this accordance it gives aid to nature, and receives aid from it, in impressing the mind with God. We live in the midst of a glorious universe, which was meant to be a witness and a preacher of the Divinity; and a revelation from God may be expected to be in harmony with this system,

and to carry on a common ministry with it in lifting the soul to God. Now, Unitarianism is in accordance with nature. It teaches One Father, and so does creation, the more it is explored. Philosophy, in proportion as it extends its views of the universe, sees in it, more and more, a sublime and beautiful unity, and multiplies proofs, that all things have sprung from one intelligence, one power, one love. The whole outward creation proclaims to the Unitarian the truth in which he delights. So does his own soul. But neither nature nor the soul bears one trace of Three Divine Persons. Nature is no Trinitarian. It gives not a hint, not a glimpse of a tri-personal author. Trinitarianism is a confined system, shut up in a few texts, a few written lines, where many of the wisest minds have failed to discover it. It is not inscribed on the heavens and the earth, not borne on every wind, not resounding and reëchoing through the universe. The sun and stars say nothing of a God of three persons. They all speak of the One Father whom *we* adore. To *our* ears, one and the same voice comes from God's word and works, a full and swelling strain, growing clearer, louder, more thrilling as we listen, and with one blessed influence lifting up our souls to the Almighty Father.

This accordance between nature and revelation increases the power of both over the mind. Concurring as they do in one impression, they make that impression deeper. To men of reflection, the conviction of the reality of religion is exceedingly heightened, by a perception of harmony in the views of it which they derive from various sources. Revelation is never received with so intimate a persuasion of its truth, as when it is seen to conspire to the same ends and in-

pressions, for which all other things are made. It is no small objection to Trinitarianism, that it is an insulated doctrine, that it reveals a God whom we meet nowhere in the universe. Three Divine Persons, I repeat it, are found only in a few texts, and those so dark, that the gifted minds of Milton, Newton, and Locke, could not find them there. Nature gives them not a whisper of evidence. And can they be as real and powerful to the mind, as that One Father, whom the general strain and common voice of Scripture, and the universal voice of nature call us to adore?

VI. Unitarianism favors piety by opening the mind to new and ever-enlarging views of God. Teaching, as it does, the same God with nature, it leads us to seek him in nature. It does not shut us up in the written word, precious as that manifestation of the Divinity is. It considers revelation, not as independent of his other means of instruction; not as a separate agent; but as a part of the great system of God for enlightening and elevating the human soul; as intimately joined with creation and providence, and intended to concur with them; and as given to assist us in reading the volume of the universe. Thus Unitarianism, where its genuine influence is experienced, tends to enrich and fertilize the mind; opens it to new lights, wherever they spring up; and, by combining, makes more efficient, the means of religious knowledge. Trinitarianism, on the other hand, is a system which tends to confine the mind; to shut it up in what is written; to diminish its interest in the universe; and to disincline it to bright and enlarged views of God's works. — This effect will be explained, in the first place, if we consider, that the peculiarities of Trinitarianism differ so much from the

teachings of the universe, that he who attaches himself to the one, will be in danger of losing his interest in the other. The ideas of Three Divine Persons, of God clothing himself in flesh, of the infinite Creator saving the guilty by transferring their punishment to an innocent being, these ideas cannot easily be made to coalesce in the mind with that which nature gives, of One Almighty Father and Unbounded Spirit, whom no worlds can contain, and whose vicegerent in the human breast pronounces it a crime, to lay the penalties of vice on the pure and unoffending.

But Trinitarianism has a still more positive influence in shutting the mind against improving views from the universe. It tends to throw gloom over God's works. Imagining that Christ is to be exalted, by giving him an exclusive agency in enlightening and recovering mankind, it is tempted to disparage other lights and influences; and, for the purpose of magnifying his salvation, it inclines to exaggerate the darkness and desperateness of man's present condition. The mind thus impressed, naturally leans to those views of nature and of society, which will strengthen the ideas of desolation and guilt. It is tempted to aggravate the miseries of life, and to see in them only the marks of divine displeasure and punishing justice; and overlooks their obvious fitness and design to awaken our powers, exercise our virtues, and strengthen our social ties. In like manner, it exaggerates the sins of men, that the need of an Infinite atonement may be maintained. Some of the most affecting tokens of God's love within and around us are obscured by this gloomy theology. The glorious faculties of the soul, its high aspirations, its sensibility to the great and good in character, its sympathy with dis-

interested and suffering virtue, its benevolent and religious instincts, its thirst for a happiness not found on earth, these are overlooked or thrown into the shade, that they may not disturb the persuasion of man's natural corruption. Ingenuity is employed to disparage what is interesting in the human character. Whilst the bursts of passion in the newborn child are gravely urged as indications of a native, rooted corruption; its bursts of affection, its sweet smile, its innocent and irrepressible joy, its loveliness and beauty, are not listened to, though they plead more eloquently its alliance with higher natures. The sacred and tender affections of home; the unwearied watchings and cheerful sacrifices of parents; the reverential, grateful assiduity of children, smoothing an aged father's or mother's descent to the grave; woman's love, stronger than death; the friendship of brothers and sisters; the anxious affection, which tends around the bed of sickness; the subdued voice, which breathes comfort into the mourner's heart; all the endearing offices, which shed a serene light through our dwellings; these are explained away by the thorough advocates of this system, so as to include no real virtue, so as to consist with a natural aversion to goodness. Even the higher efforts of disinterested benevolence, and the most unaffected expressions of piety, if not connected with what is called "the true faith," are, by the most rigid disciples of the doctrine which I oppose, resolved into the passion for distinction, or some other working of "unsanctified nature." Thus, Trinitarianism and its kindred doctrines have a tendency to veil God's goodness, to sully his fairest works, to dim the lustre of those innocent and pure affections, which a divine breath kindles in the

soul, to blight the beauty and freshness of creation, and in this way to consume the very nutriment of piety. We know, and rejoice to know, that in multitudes this tendency is counteracted by a cheerful temperament, a benevolent nature, and a strength of gratitude, which bursts the shackles of a melancholy system. But from the nature of the doctrine, the tendency exists and is strong; and an impartial observer will often discern it resulting in gloomy, depressing views of life and the universe.

Trinitarianism, by thus tending to exclude bright and enlarged views of the creation, seems to me not only to chill the heart, but to injure the understanding, as far as moral and religious truth is concerned. It does not send the mind far and wide for new and elevating objects; and we have here one explanation of the barrenness and feebleness, by which theological writings are so generally marked. It is not wonderful, that the prevalent theology should want vitality and enlargement of thought, for it does not accord with the perfections of God and the spirit of the universe. It has not its root in eternal truth; but is a narrow, technical, artificial system, the fabrication of unrefined ages, and consequently incapable of being blended with the new lights which are spreading over the most interesting subjects, and of being incorporated with the results and anticipations of original and progressive minds. It stands apart in the mind, instead of seizing upon new truths, and converting them into its own nutriment. With few exceptions, the Trinitarian theology of the present day is greatly deficient in freshness of thought, and in power to awaken the interest and to meet the intellectual and spiritual wants of thinking men. I see

piety and exemplary devotion. The mind, which has been taught to regard him as of equal majesty and authority with the Father, cannot easily feel the power of his character as the affectionate son, whose meat it was to do his Father's will. The mind, accustomed to make him the ultimate object of worship, cannot easily recognise in him the pattern of that worship, the guide to the Most High. The characters are incongruous, and their union perplexing, so that neither exerts its full energy on the mind.

Trinitarianism also exhibits the work as well as character of Christ, in lights less favorable to piety. It does not make the promotion of piety his chief end. It teaches, that the highest purpose of his mission was to reconcile God to man, not man to God. It teaches, that the most formidable obstacle to human happiness lies in the claims and threatenings of divine justice. Hence, it leads men to prize Christ more for answering these claims and averting these threatenings, than for awakening in the human soul sentiments of love towards its Father in heaven. Accordingly, multitudes seem to prize pardon more than piety, and think it a greater boon to escape, through Christ's sufferings, the fire of hell, than to receive, through his influence, the spirit of heaven, the spirit of devotion. Is such a system propitious to a generous and ever-growing piety ?

If I may be allowed a short digression, I would conclude this head with the general observation, that we deem our views of Jesus Christ more interesting than those of Trinitarianism. We feel that we should lose much, by exchanging the distinct character and mild radiance with which he offers himself to our minds, for the confused and irreconcilable glories with which that

system labors to invest him. According to Unitarianism, he is a being who may be understood, for he is one mind, one conscious nature. According to the opposite faith, he is an inconceivable compound of two most dissimilar minds, joining in one person a finite and infinite nature, a soul weak and ignorant, and a soul almighty and omniscient. And is such a being a proper object for human thought and affection?—I add, as another important consideration, that to us Jesus, instead of being the second of three obscure unintelligible persons, is first and preëminent in the sphere in which he acts, and is thus the object of a distinct attachment, which he shares with no equals or rivals. To us, he is first of the sons of God, the Son by peculiar nearness and likeness to the Father. He is first of all the ministers of God's mercy and beneficence, and through him the largest stream of bounty flows to the creation. He is first in God's favor and love, the most accepted of worshippers, the most prevalent of intercessors. In this mighty universe, framed to be a mirror of its Author, we turn to Jesus as the brightest image of God, and gratefully yield him a place in our souls, second only to the Infinite Father, to whom he himself directs our supreme affection.

VIII. I now proceed to a great topic. Unitarianism promotes piety, by meeting the wants of man as a sinner. The wants of the sinner may be expressed almost in one word. He wants assurances of mercy in his Creator. He wants pledges, that God is Love in its purest form, that is, that He has a goodness so disinterested, free, full, strong, and immutable, that the ingratitude and disobedience of his creatures cannot overcome it. This unconquerable love, which in Scrip-

ture is denominated grace, and which waits not for merit to call it forth, but flows out to the most guilty, is the sinner's only hope, and it is fitted to call forth the most devoted gratitude. Now, this grace or mercy of God, which seeks the lost, and receives and blesses the returning child, is proclaimed by that faith which we advocate, with a clearness and energy, which cannot be surpassed. Unitarianism will not listen for a moment to the common errors, by which this bright attribute is obscured. It will not hear of a vindictive wrath in God, which must be quenched by blood; or of a justice, which binds his mercy with an iron chain, until its demands are satisfied to the full. It will not hear that God needs any foreign influence to awaken his mercy; but teaches, that the yearnings of the tenderest human parent towards a lost child, are but a faint image of God's deep and overflowing compassion towards erring man. This essential and unchangeable propensity of the Divine Mind to forgiveness, the Unitarian beholds shining forth through the whole Word of God, and especially in the mission and revelation of Jesus Christ, who lived and died to make manifest the inexhaustible plenitude of divine grace; and, aided by revelation, he sees this attribute of God everywhere, both around him and within him. He sees it in the sun which shines, and the rain which descends on the evil and unthankful; in the peace, which returns to the mind in proportion to its return to God and duty; in the sentiment of compassion, which springs up spontaneously in the human breast towards the fallen and lost; and in the moral instinct, which teaches us to cherish this compassion as a sacred principle, as an emanation of God's infinite love. In truth, Unitarianism asserts so strongly the

mercy of God, that the reproach thrown upon it is, that it takes from the sinner the dread of punishment, — a reproach wholly without foundation; for our system teaches that God's mercy is not an instinctive tenderness, which cannot inflict pain; but an all-wise love, which desires the true and lasting good of its object, and consequently desires first for the sinner that restoration to purity, without which, shame, and suffering, and exile from God and heaven are of necessity and unalterably his doom. Thus Unitarianism holds forth God's grace and forgiving goodness most resplendently; and, by this manifestation of him, it tends to awaken a tender and confiding piety; an ingenuous love, which mourns that it has offended; an ingenuous aversion to sin, not because sin brings punishment, but because it separates the mind from this merciful Father.

Now we object to Trinitarianism, that it obscures the mercy of God. It does so in various ways. We have already seen, that it gives such views of God's government, that we can hardly conceive of this attribute as entering into his character. Mercy to the sinner is the principle of love or benevolence in its highest form; and surely this cannot be expected from a being who brings us into existence burdened with hereditary guilt, and who threatens with endless punishment and woe the heirs of so frail and feeble a nature. With such a Creator, the idea of mercy cannot coalesce; and I will say more, that, under such a government, man would need no mercy; for he would owe no allegiance to such a maker, and could not of course contract the guilt of violating it; and, without guilt, no grace or pardon would be wanted. The severity of this system would place him on the ground of an injured

being. The wrong would lie on the side of the Creator.

In the next place, Trinitarianism obscures God's mercy, by the manner in which it supposes pardon to be communicated. It teaches, that God remits the punishment of the offender, in consequence of receiving an equivalent from an innocent person; that the sufferings of the sinner are removed by a full satisfaction made to divine justice, in the sufferings of a substitute. And is this "the quality of mercy"? What means forgiveness, but the reception of the returning child through the strength of parental love? This doctrine invests the Saviour with a claim of merit, with a right to the remission of the sins of his followers; and represents God's reception of the penitent as a recompense due to the worth of his Son. And is mercy, which means free and undeserved love, made more manifest, more resplendent, by the introduction of merit and right as the ground of our salvation? Could a surer expedient be invented for obscuring its freeness, and for turning the sinner's gratitude from the sovereign who demands, to the sufferer who offers, full satisfaction for his guilt?

I know it is said, that Trinitarianism magnifies God's mercy, because it teaches, that he himself provided the substitute for the guilty. But I reply, that the work here ascribed to mercy is not the most appropriate, nor most fitted to manifest it and impress it on the heart. This may be made apparent by familiar illustrations. Suppose that a creditor, through compassion to certain debtors, should persuade a benevolent and opulent man to pay him in their stead. Would not the debtors see a greater mercy, and feel a weightier obligation, if they were to receive a free, gratuitous release? And will

not their chief gratitude stray beyond the creditor to the benevolent substitute? Or, suppose that a parent, unwilling to inflict a penalty on a disobedient but feeble child, should persuade a stronger child to bear it. Would not the offender see a more touching mercy in a free forgiveness, springing immediately from a parent's heart, than in this circuitous remission? And will he not be tempted to turn with his strongest love to the generous sufferer? In this process of substitution, of which Trinitarianism boasts so loudly, the mercy of God becomes complicated with the rights and merits of the substitute, and is a more distant cause of our salvation. These rights and merits are nearer, more visible, and more than divide the glory with grace and mercy in our rescue. They turn the mind from Divine Goodness, as the only spring of its happiness, and only rock of its hope. Now this is to deprive piety of one of its chief means of growth and joy. Nothing should stand between the soul and God's mercy. Nothing should share with mercy the work of our salvation. Christ's intercession should ever be regarded as an application to love and mercy, not as a demand of justice, not as a claim of merit. I grieve to say, that Christ, as now viewed by multitudes, hides the lustre of that very attribute which it is his great purpose to display. I fear, that, to many, Jesus wears the glory of a more winning, tender mercy, than his Father, and that he is regarded as the sinner's chief resource. Is this the way to invigorate piety?

Trinitarians imagine, that there is one view of their system peculiarly fitted to give peace and hope to the sinner, and consequently to promote gratitude and love. It is this. They say, it provides an Infinite substitute

for the sinner, than which nothing can give greater relief to the burdened conscience. Jesus, being the second person of the Trinity, was able to make infinite satisfaction for sin; and what, they ask, in Unitarianism, can compare with this? I have time only for two brief replies. And first, this doctrine of an Infinite satisfaction, or, as it is improperly called, of an Infinite atonement, subverts, instead of building up, hope; because it argues infinite severity in the government which requires it. Did I believe, what Trinitarianism teaches, that not the least transgression, not even the first sin of the dawning mind of the child, could be remitted without an infinite expiation, I should feel myself living under a legislation unspeakably dreadful, under laws written, like Draco's, in blood; and, instead of thanking the Sovereign for providing an infinite substitute, I should shudder at the attributes which render this expedient necessary. It is commonly said, that an infinite atonement is needed to make due and deep impressions of the evil of sin. But He who framed all souls, and gave them their susceptibilities, ought not to be thought so wanting in goodness and wisdom, as to have constituted a universe, which demands so dreadful and degrading a method of enforcing obedience, as the penal sufferings of a God. This doctrine, of an Infinite substitute suffering the penalty of sin, to manifest God's wrath against sin, and thus to support his government, is, I fear, so familiar to us all, that its severe character is overlooked. Let me, then, set it before you, in new terms, and by a new illustration; and if, in so doing, I may wound the feelings of some who hear me, I beg them to believe, that I do it with pain, and from no impulse but a desire to serve the cause of truth. —

Suppose, then, that a teacher should come among you, and should tell you, that the Creator, in order to pardon his own children, had erected a gallows in the centre of the universe, and had publicly executed upon it, in room of the offenders, an Infinite Being, the partaker of his own Supreme Divinity; suppose him to declare, that this execution was appointed, as a most conspicuous and terrible manifestation of God's justice, and of the infinite woe denounced by his law; and suppose him to add, that all beings in heaven and earth are required to fix their eyes on this fearful sight, as the most powerful enforcement of obedience and virtue. Would you not tell him, that he calumniated his Maker? Would you not say to him, that this central gallows threw gloom over the universe; that the spirit of a government, whose very acts of pardon were written in such blood, was terror, not paternal love; and that the obedience which needed to be upheld by this horrid spectacle, was nothing worth? Would you not say to him, that even you, in this infancy and imperfection of your being, were capable of being wrought upon by nobler motives, and of hating sin through more generous views; and that much more the angels, those pure flames of love, need not the gallows and an executed God to confirm their loyalty? You would all so feel, at such teaching as I have supposed; and yet how does this differ from the popular doctrine of atonement? According to this doctrine, we have an Infinite Being sentenced to suffer, as a substitute, the death of the cross, a punishment more ignominious and agonizing than the gallows, a punishment reserved for slaves and the vilest malefactors; and he suffers this punishment, that he may show forth the terrors of God's law, and

strike a dread of sin through the universe. — I am indeed aware, that multitudes, who profess this doctrine, are not accustomed to bring it to their minds distinctly in this light; that they do not ordinarily regard the death of Christ as a criminal execution, as an infinitely dreadful infliction of justice, as intended to show, that, without an infinite satisfaction, they must hope nothing from God. Their minds turn, by a generous instinct, from these appalling views, to the love, the disinterestedness, the moral grandeur and beauty of the sufferer; and through such thoughts they make the cross a source of peace, gratitude, love, and hope; thus affording a delightful exemplification of the power of the human mind, to attach itself to what is good and purifying in the most irrational system. Not a few may shudder at the illustration which I have here given; but in what respects it is unjust to the popular doctrine of atonement, I cannot discern. I grieve to shock sincere Christians, of whatever name; but I grieve more for the corruption of our common faith, which I have now felt myself bound to expose.

I have a second objection to this doctrine of Infinite atonement. When examined minutely, and freed from ambiguous language, it vanishes into air. It is wholly delusion. The Trinitarian tells me, that, according to his system, we have an infinite substitute; that the Infinite God was pleased to bear our punishment, and consequently, that pardon is made sure. But I ask him, Do I understand you? Do you mean, that the Great God, who never changes, whose happiness is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, that this Eternal Being really bore the penalty of my sins, really suffered and died? Every pious man, when pressed by this

question, answers, No. What, then, does the doctrine of Infinite atonement mean? Why, this; that God took into union with himself our nature, that is, a human body and soul; and these bore the suffering for our sins; and, through his union with these, God may be said to have borne it himself. Thus, this vaunted system goes out,—in words. The Infinite victim proves to be frail man, and God's share in the sacrifice is a mere fiction. I ask with solemnity, Can this doctrine give one moment's ease to the conscience of an unbiassed, thinking man? Does it not unsettle all hope, by making the whole religion suspicious and unsure? I am compelled to say, that I see in it no impression of majesty, or wisdom, or love, nothing worthy of a God; and when I compare it with that nobler faith, which directs our eyes and hearts to God's essential mercy, as our only hope, I am amazed that any should ascribe to it superior efficacy, as a religion for sinners, as a means of filling the soul with pious trust and love. I know, indeed, that some will say, that, in giving up an infinite atonement, I deprive myself of all hope of divine favor. To such, I would say, You do wrong to God's mercy. On that mercy I cast myself without a fear. I indeed desire Christ to intercede for me. I regard his relation to me as God's kindest appointment. Through him, "grace and truth come" to me from Heaven, and I look forward to his friendship, as among the highest blessings of my whole future being. But I cannot, and dare not ask him, to offer an infinite satisfaction for my sins; to appease the wrath of God; to reconcile the Universal Father to his own offspring; to open to me those arms of Divine mercy, which have encircled and borne me from the first moment of my being. The essential and

unbounded mercy of my Creator, is the foundation of my hope, and a broader and surer the universe cannot give me.

'IX. I now proceed to the last consideration, which the limits of this discourse will permit me to urge. It has been more than once suggested, but deserves to be distinctly stated. I observe, then, that Unitarianism promotes piety, because it is a rational religion. By this, I do not mean that its truths can be fully comprehended; for there is not an object in nature or religion, which has not innumerable connexions and relations beyond our grasp of thought. I mean, that its doctrines are consistent with one another, and with all established truth. Unitarianism is in harmony with the great and clear principles of revelation; with the laws and powers of human nature; with the dictates of the moral sense; with the noblest instincts and highest aspirations of the soul; and with the lights which the universe throws on the character of its author. We can hold this doctrine without self-contradiction, without rebelling against our rational and moral powers, without putting to silence the divine monitor in the breast. And this is an unspeakable benefit; for a religion thus coincident with reason, conscience, and our whole spiritual being, has the foundations of universal empire in the breast; and the heart, finding no resistance in the intellect, yields itself wholly, cheerfully, without doubts or misgivings, to the love of its Creator.

To Trinitarianism we object, what has always been objected to it, that it contradicts and degrades reason, and thus exposes the mind to the worst delusions. Some of its advocates, more courageous than prudent, have even recommended "the prostration of the under-

standing," as preparatory to its reception. Its chief doctrine is an outrage on our rational nature. Its three persons who constitute its God, must either be frittered away into three unmeaning distinctions, into sounds signifying nothing; or they are three conscious agents, who cannot, by any human art or metaphysical device, be made to coalesce into one being; who cannot be really viewed as one mind, having one consciousness and one will. Now a religious system, the cardinal principle of which offends the understanding, very naturally conforms itself throughout to this prominent feature, and becomes prevalently irrational. He who is compelled to defend his faith in any particular, by the plea, that human reason is so depraved through the fall, as to be an inadequate judge of religion, and that God is honored by our reception of what shocks the intellect, seems to have no defence left against accumulated absurdities. According to these principles, the fanatic who exclaimed, "I believe, because it is impossible," had a fair title to canonization. Reason is too godlike a faculty, to be insulted with impunity. Accordingly, Trinitarianism, as we have seen, links itself with several degrading errors; and its most natural alliance is with Calvinism, that cruel faith, which, stripping God of mercy and man of power, has made Christianity an instrument of torture to the timid, and an object of doubt or scorn to hardier spirits. I repeat it, a doctrine which violates reason like the Trinity, prepares its advocates, in proportion as it is incorporated into the mind, for worse and worse delusions. It breaks down the distinctions and barriers between truth and falsehood. It creates a diseased taste for prodigies, fictions, and exaggerations, for startling mysteries, and wild dreams of enthusiasm. It destroys the relish for

the simple, chaste, serene beauties of truth. Especially when the prostration of understanding is taught as an act of piety, we cannot wonder, that the grossest superstitions should be devoured, and that the credulity of the multitude should keep pace with the forgeries of imposture and fanaticism. The history of the Church is the best comment on the effects of divorcing reason from religion; and if the present age is disburdened of many of the superstitions under which Christianity and human nature groaned for ages, it owes its relief in no small degree to the reinstating of reason in her long-violated rights.

The injury to religion, from irrational doctrines when thoroughly believed, is immense. The human soul has a unity. Its various faculties are adapted to one another. One life pervades it; and its beauty, strength, and growth depend on nothing so much, as on the harmony and joint action of all its principles. To wound and degrade it in any of its powers, and especially in the noble and distinguishing power of reason, is to inflict on it universal injury. No notion is more false, than that the heart is to thrive by dwarfing the intellect; that perplexing doctrines are the best food of piety; that religion flourishes most luxuriantly in mist and darkness. Reason was given for God as its great object; and for him it should be kept sacred, invigorated, clarified, protected from human usurpation, and inspired with a meek self-reverence.

The soul never acts so effectually or joyfully, as when all its powers and affections conspire; as when thought and feeling, reason and sensibility, are called forth together by one great and kindling object. It will never devote itself to God with its whole energy, whilst its

guiding faculty sees in him a being to shock and confound it. We want a harmony in our inward nature. We want a piety, which will join light and fervor, and on which the intellectual power will look benignantly. We want religion to be so exhibited, that, in the clearest moments of the intellect, its signatures of truth will grow brighter ; that, instead of tottering, it will gather strength and stability from the progress of the human mind. These wants we believe to be met by Unitarian Christianity, and therefore we prize it as the best friend of piety.

I have thus stated the chief grounds, on which I rest the claim of Unitarianism to the honor of promoting an enlightened, profound, and happy piety.

Am I now asked, why we prize our system, and why we build churches for its inculcation ? If I may be allowed to express myself in the name of conscientious Unitarians, who apply their doctrine to their own hearts and lives, I would reply thus : We prize and would spread our views, because we believe that they reveal God to us in greater glory, and bring us nearer to him, than any other. We are conscious of a deep want, which the creation cannot supply, the want of a Perfect Being, on whom the strength of our love may be centred, and of an Almighty Father, in whom our weaknesses, imperfections, and sorrows may find resource ; and such a Being and Father, Unitarian Christianity sets before us. For this we prize it above all price. We can part with every other good. We can endure the darkening of life's fairest prospects. But this bright, consoling doctrine of One God, even the Father, is dearer than life, and we cannot let it go. — Through

this faith, every thing grows brighter to our view. Born of such a Parent, we esteem our existence an inestimable gift. We meet everywhere our Father, and his presence is as a sun shining on our path. We see him in his works, and hear his praise rising from every spot which we tread. We feel him near in our solitudes, and sometimes enjoy communion with him more tender than human friendship. We see him in our duties, and perform them more gladly, because they are the best tribute we can offer our Heavenly Benefactor. Even the consciousness of sin, mournful as it is, does not subvert our peace; for, in the mercy of God, as made manifest in Jesus Christ, we see an inexhaustible fountain of strength, purity, and pardon, for all who, in filial reliance, seek these heavenly gifts. — Through this faith, we are conscious of a new benevolence springing up to our fellow-creatures, purer and more enlarged than natural affection. Towards all mankind we see a rich and free love flowing from the common Parent, and, touched by this love, we are the friends of all. We compassionate the most guilty, and would win them back to God. — Through this faith, we receive the happiness of an ever-enlarging hope. There is no good too vast for us to anticipate for the universe or for ourselves, from such a Father as we believe in. We hope from him, what we deem his greatest gift, even the gift of his own Spirit, and the happiness of advancing for ever in truth and virtue, in power and love, in union of mind with the Father and the Son. — We are told, indeed, that our faith will not prove an anchor in the last hour. But we have known those, whose departure it has brightened; and our experience of its power, in trial and peril, has proved it to be equal to all the wants of human nature.

We doubt not, that, to its sincere followers, death will be a transition to the calm, pure, joyful mansions, prepared by Christ for his disciples. There we expect to meet that great and good Deliverer. With the eye of faith, we already see him looking round him with celestial love on all of every name, who have imbibed his spirit. His spirit; his loyal and entire devotion to the will of his Heavenly Father; his universal, unconquerable benevolence, through which he freely gave from his pierced side his blood, his life for the salvation of the world; this divine love, and not creeds, and names, and forms, will then be found to attract his supreme regard. This spirit we trust to see in multitudes of every sect and name; and we trust, too, that they, who now reproach us, will at that day recognise, in the dreaded Unitarian, this only badge of Christ, and will bid him welcome to the joy of our common Lord. — I have thus stated the views with which we have reared this building. We desire to glorify God, to promote a purer, nobler, happier piety. Even if we err in doctrine, we think that these motives should shield us from reproach; should disarm that intolerance, which would exclude us from the church on earth, and from our Father's house in heaven.

We end, as we began, by offering up this building to the Only Living and True God. We have erected it amidst our private habitations, as a remembrancer of our Creator. We have reared it in this busy city, as a retreat for pious meditation and prayer. We dedicate it to the King and Father Eternal, the King of kings and Lord of lords. We dedicate it to his Unity, to his unrivalled and undivided Majesty. We dedicate it to the praise of his free, unbought, unmerited grace.

We dedicate it to Jesus Christ, to the memory of his love, to the celebration of his divine virtue, to the preaching of that truth, which he sealed with blood. We dedicate it to the Holy Spirit, to the sanctifying influence of God, to those celestial emanations of light and strength, which visit and refresh the devout mind. We dedicate it to prayers and praises, which, we trust, will be continued and perfected in heaven. We dedicate it to social worship, to Christian intercourse, to the communion of saints. We dedicate it to the cause of pure morals, of public order, of temperance, uprightness, and general good will. We dedicate it to Christian admonition, to those warnings, remonstrances, and earnest and tender persuasions, by which the sinner may be arrested, and brought back to God. We dedicate it to Christian consolation, to those truths which assuage sorrow, animate penitence, and lighten the load of human anxiety and fear. We dedicate it to the doctrine of Immortality, to sublime and joyful hopes which reach beyond the grave. In a word, we dedicate it to the great work of perfecting the human soul, and fitting it for nearer approach to its Author. Here may heart meet heart. Here may man meet God. From this place may the song of praise, the ascription of gratitude, the sigh of penitence, the prayer for grace, and the holy resolve, ascend as fragrant incense to Heaven; and, through many generations, may parents bequeath to their children this house, as a sacred spot, where God had "lifted upon them his countenance," and given them pledges of his everlasting love.

THE

GREAT PURPOSE OF CHRISTIANITY.

DISCOURSE

AT THE

INSTALLATION OF THE REV. M. I. MOTTE.

Boston, 1828.

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2 Timothy i. 7: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Why was Christianity given? Why did Christ seal it with his blood? Why is it to be preached? What is the great happiness it confers? What is the chief blessing for which it is to be prized? What is its pre-eminent glory, its first claim on the gratitude of mankind? These are great questions. I wish to answer them plainly, according to the light and ability which God has given me. I read the answer to them in the text. There I learn the great good which God confers through Jesus Christ. "He hath given us, not the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." The glory of Christianity is, the pure and lofty action which it communicates to the human mind. It does not breathe a timid, abject spirit. If it did, it would deserve no praise. It gives power, energy,

courage, constancy to the will; love, disinterestedness, enlarged affection to the heart; soundness, clearness, and vigor to the understanding. It rescues him, who receives it, from sin, from the sway of the passions; gives him the full and free use of his best powers; brings out and brightens the divine image in which he was created; and, in this way, not only bestows the promise, but the beginning, of heaven. This is the excellence of Christianity.

This subject I propose to illustrate. Let me begin it with one remark, which I would willingly avoid, but which seems to me to be demanded by the circumstances in which I am placed. I beg you to remember, that in this discourse I speak in my own name, and in no other. I am not giving you the opinions of any sect or body of men, but my own. I hold myself alone responsible for what I utter. Let none listen to me for the purpose of learning what others think. I indeed belong to that class of Christians, who are distinguished by believing that there is one God, even the Father, and that Jesus Christ is not this one God, but his dependent and obedient Son. But my accordance with these is far from being universal, nor have I any desire to extend it. What other men believe, is to me of little moment. Their arguments I gratefully hear. Their conclusions I am free to receive or reject. I have no anxiety to wear the livery of any party. I indeed take cheerfully the name of a Unitarian, because unwearied efforts are used to raise against it a popular cry; and I have not so learned Christ, as to shrink from reproaches cast on what I deem his truth. Were the name more honored, I should be glad to throw it off; for I fear the shackles which a party connexion im

poses. I wish to regard myself as belonging, not to a sect, but to the community of free minds, of lovers of truth, of followers of Christ, both on earth and in heaven. I desire to escape the narrow walls of a particular church, and to live under the open sky, in the broad light, looking far and wide, seeing with my own eyes, hearing with my own ears, and following truth meekly, but resolutely, however arduous or solitary be the path in which she leads. I am, then, no organ of a sect, but speak from myself alone ; and I thank God that I live at a time, and under circumstances, which make it my duty to lay open my whole mind with freedom and simplicity.

I began with asking, What is the main design and glory of Christianity ? and I repeat the answer, that its design is to give, not a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind. In this its glory chiefly consists. In other words, the influence, which it is intended to exert on the human mind, constitutes its supreme honor and happiness. Christ is a great Saviour, as he redeems or sets free the mind, cleansing it from evil, breathing into it the love of virtue, calling forth its noblest faculties and affections, enduing it with moral power, restoring it to order, health, and liberty. Such was his great aim. To illustrate these views will be the object of the present discourse.

In reading the New Testament, I everywhere meet the end here ascribed to Jesus Christ. He came, as I am there taught, not to be an outward, but inward deliverer ; not to rear an outward throne, but to establish his kingdom within us. He came, according to the express language and plain import of the sacred writers, "to save us from sin," "to bless us by turning us

from our iniquities," "to redeem us" from corruptions "handed down by tradition," to form "a glorious and spotless church" or community, to "create us anew after the image of God," to make us by his "promises partakers of a divine nature," and to give us pardon and heaven by calling us to repentance and a growing virtue. In reading the New Testament, I everywhere learn, that Christ lived, taught, died, and rose again, to exert a purifying and ennobling influence on the human character; to make us victorious over sin, over ourselves, over peril and pain; to join us to God by filial love, and, above all, by likeness of nature, by participation of his spirit. This is plainly laid down in the New Testament as the supreme end of Christ.

Let me now ask, Can a nobler end be ascribed to Jesus? I affirm, that there is, and can be, no greater work on earth, than to purify the soul from evil, and to kindle in it new light, life, energy, and love. I maintain, that the true measure of the glory of a religion is to be found in the spirit and power, which it communicates to its disciples. This is one of the plain teachings of reason. The chief blessing to an intelligent being, that which makes all other blessings poor, is the improvement of his own mind. Man is glorious and happy, not by what he has, but by what he is. He can receive nothing better or nobler than the unfolding of his own spiritual nature. The highest existence in the universe is Mind; for God is mind; and the developement of that principle which assimilates us to God, must be our supreme good. The omnipotent Creator, we have reason to think, can bestow nothing greater than intelligence, love, rectitude, energy of will and of benevolent action; for these are the splendors of his

own nature. We adore him for these. In imparting these, he imparts, as it were, himself. We are too apt to look abroad for good. But the only true good is within. In this outward universe, magnificent as it is, in the bright day and the starry night, in the earth and the skies, we can discover nothing so vast as thought, so strong as the unconquerable purpose of duty, so sublime as the spirit of disinterestedness and self-sacrifice. A mind which withstands all the powers of the outward universe, all the pains which fire and sword and storm can inflict, rather than swerve from uprightness, is nobler than the universe. Why will we not learn the glory of the soul? We are seeking a foreign good. But we all possess within us what is of more worth than the external creation. For this outward system is the product of Mind. All its harmony, beauty, and beneficent influences are the fruits and manifestations of Thought and Love; and is it not nobler and happier, to be enriched with these energies, from which the universe springs, and to which it owes its magnificence, than to possess the universe itself? It is not what we have, but what we are, which constitutes our glory and felicity. The only true and durable riches belong to the mind. A soul, narrow and debased, may extend its possessions to the ends of the earth, but is poor and wretched still. It is through inward health that we enjoy all outward things. Philosophers teach us, that the mind creates the beauty which it admires in nature; and we all know, that, when abandoned to evil passions, it can blot out this beauty, and spread over the fairest scenes the gloom of a dungeon. We all know, that by vice it can turn the cup of social happiness into poison, and the most prosperous condition

of life into a curse. From these views we learn, that the true friend and Saviour, is not he who acts for us abroad, but who acts within, who sets the soul free, touches the springs of thought and affection, binds us to God, and, by assimilating us to the Creator, brings us into harmony with the creation. Thus the end, which we have ascribed to Christ, is the most glorious and beneficent which can be accomplished by any power on earth or in heaven.

That the highest purpose of Christianity is such as has now been affirmed, might easily be shown from a survey of all its doctrines and precepts. It might be shown, that every office with which Jesus Christ is invested, was intended to give him power over the human character; and that his great distinction consists in the grandeur and beneficence of his influence on the soul. But a discussion of this extent cannot be comprehended in a single discourse. Instead of a general survey of the subject, I shall take one feature of it, a primary and most important one, and shall attempt to show, that the great aim of this is to call forth the soul to a higher life, to a nobler exercise of its power and affections.

This leading feature of Christianity is, the knowledge which it gives of the character of God. Jesus Christ came to reveal the Father. In the prophecies concerning him in the Old Testament, no characteristic is so frequently named, as that he should spread the knowledge of the true God. Now I ask, What constitutes the importance of such a revelation? Why has the Creator sent his Son to make himself known? I answer, God is most worthy to be known, because he is the most quickening, purifying, and ennobling object for the mind; and his great purpose in revealing him-

self is, that he may exalt and perfect human nature. God, as he is manifested by Christ, is another name for intellectual and moral excellence; and, in the knowledge of him, our intellectual and moral powers find their element, nutriment, strength, expansion, and happiness. To know God is to attain to the sublimest conception in the universe. To love God, is to bind ourselves to a being, who is fitted, as no other being is, to penetrate and move our whole hearts; in loving whom, we exalt ourselves; in loving whom, we love the great, the good, the beautiful, and the infinite; and under whose influence, the soul unfolds itself as a perennial plant under the cherishing sun. This constitutes the chief glory of religion. It ennobles the soul. In this its unrivalled dignity and happiness consist.

I fear, that the world at large think religion a very different thing from what has now been set forth. Too many think it a depressing, rather than an elevating service, that it breaks rather than ennobles the spirit, that it teaches us to cower before an almighty and irresistible being; and I must confess, that religion, as it has been generally taught, is any thing but an elevating principle. It has been used to scare the child, and appall the adult. Men have been virtually taught to glorify God by flattery, rather than by becoming excellent and glorious themselves, and thus doing honor to their Maker. Our dependence on God has been so taught, as to extinguish the consciousness of our free nature and moral power. Religion, in one or another form, has always been an engine for crushing the human soul. But such is not the religion of Christ. If it were, it would deserve no respect. We are not, we cannot be bound to prostrate ourselves before a deity

who makes us abject and base. That moral principle within us, which calls us to watch over and to perfect our own souls, is an inspiration, which no teaching can supersede or abolish. But I cannot bear, even in way of argument, to speak of Christianity as giving views of God depressing and debasing to the human mind. Christ hath revealed to us God as The Father, and as a Father in the noblest sense of that word. He hath revealed him, as the author and lover of all souls, desiring to redeem all from sin, and to impress his likeness more and more resplendently on all; as proffering to all that best gift in the universe, his "holy spirit"; as having sent his beloved Son to train us up, and to introduce us to an "inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading in the heavens." Such is the God of Jesus Christ; a being not to break the spirit, but to breathe trust, courage, constancy, magnanimity, in a word, all the sentiments which form an elevated mind.

This sentiment, that the knowledge of God, as given by Christ, is important and glorious, because quickening and exalting to the human soul, needs to be taught plainly and forcibly. The main ground of the obligation of being religious, I fear, is not understood among the multitude of Christians. Ask them, why they must know and worship God? and I fear, that, were the heart to speak, the answer would be, Because he can do with us what he will, and consequently our first concern is to secure his favor. Religion is a calculation of interest, a means of safety. God is worshipped too often on the same principle on which flattery and personal attentions are lavished on human superiors, and the worshipper cares not how abjectly he bows, if he may win to his side the power which he cannot resist. I

look with deep sorrow on this common perversion of the highest principle of the soul. My friends, God is not to be worshipped, because he has much to give, for on this principle a despot, who should be munificent to his slaves, would merit homage. He is not to be adored for mere power; for power, when joined with selfishness and crime, ought to be withstood, and the greater the might of an evil agent, the holier and the loftier is the spirit which will not bend to him. True religion is the worship of a perfect being, who is the author of perfection to those who adore him. On this ground, and on no other, religion rests.

Why is it, my hearers, that God has discoverd such solicitude, if I may use the word, to make himself known and obtain our worship? Think you, that he calls us to adore him from a love of homage or service? Has God man's passion for ruling, man's thirst for applause, man's desire to have his name shouted by crowds? Could the acclamations of the universe, though concentrated into one burst of praise, give our Creator a new or brighter consciousness of his own majesty and goodness? O! no. He has manifested himself to us, because, in the knowledge and adoration of his perfections, our own intellectual and moral perfection is found. What he desires, is, not our subjection, but our excellence. He has no love of praise. He calls us as truly to honor goodness in others as in himself, and only claims supreme honor, because he transcends all others, and because he communicates to the mind which receives him, a light, strength, purity, which no other being can confer. God has no love of empire. It could give him no pleasure to have his footstool worn by the knees of infinite hosts. It is to make us his

children in the highest sense of that word, to make us more and more the partakers of his own nature, not to multiply slaves, that he hath sent his Son to make himself known. God indeed is said to seek his own glory; but the glory of a creator must consist in the glory of his works; and we may be assured, that he cannot wish any recognition of himself, but that which will perfect his noblest, highest work, the immortal mind.

Do not, my friends, forget the great end for which Christ enjoins on us the worship of God. It is not, that we may ingratiate ourselves with an almighty agent, whose frown is destruction. It is, that we may hold communion with an intelligence and goodness, infinitely surpassing our own; that we may rise above imperfect and finite natures; that we may attach ourselves by love and reverence to the best Being in the universe; and that, through veneration and love, we may receive into our own minds the excellence, disinterestedness, wisdom, purity, and power, which we adore. This reception of the divine attributes, I desire especially to hold forth, as the most glorious end for which God reveals himself. To praise him is not enough. That homage, which has no power to assimilate us to him, is of little or no worth. The truest admiration is that by which we receive other minds into our own. True praise is a sympathy with excellence, gaining strength by utterance. Such is the praise which God demands. Then only is the purpose of Christ's revelation of God accomplished, when, by reception of the doctrine of a Paternal Divinity, we are quickened to "follow him, as dear children," and are "filled with his fulness," and become "his temples," and "dwell in God, and have God dwelling in ourselves."

I have endeavoured to show the great purpose of the Christian doctrine respecting God, or in what its importance and glory consist. Had I time, I might show, that every other doctrine of our religion has the same end I might particularly show how wonderfully fitted are the character, example, life, death, resurrection, and all the offices of Christ, to cleanse the mind from moral evil, to quicken, soften, elevate, and transform it into the divine image; and I might show that these are the influences which true faith derives from him, and through which he works out our salvation. But I cannot enter on this fruitful subject. Let me only say, that I see everywhere in Christianity, this great design of liberating and raising the human mind, on which I have enlarged. I see in Christianity nothing narrowing or depressing, nothing of the littleness of the systems which human fear, and craft, and ambition have engendered. I meet there no minute legislation, no descending to precise details, no arbitrary injunctions, no yoke of ceremonies, no outward religion. Every thing breathes freedom, liberality, enlargement. I meet there, not a formal, rigid creed, binding on the intellect, through all ages, the mechanical, passive repetition of the same words, and the same ideas; but I meet a few grand, all-comprehending truths, which are given to the soul, to be developed and applied by itself; given to it, as seed to the sower, to be cherished and expanded by its own thought, love, and obedience into more and more glorious fruits of wisdom and virtue. I see it everywhere inculcating an enlarged spirit of piety and philanthropy, leaving each of us to manifest this spirit according to the monitions of his individual conscience. I hear it everywhere calling the soul to freedom and power, by calling

it to guard against the senses, the passions, the appetites, through which it is chained, enfeebled, destroyed. I see it everywhere aiming to give the mind power over the outward world, to make it superior to events, to suffering, to material nature, to persecution, to death. I see it everywhere aiming to give the mind power over itself, to invest it with inward sovereignty, to call forth within us a mighty energy for our own elevation. I meet in Christianity only discoveries of a vast, bold, illimitable character; fitted and designed to give energy and expansion to the soul. By its doctrine of a Universal Father, it sweeps away all the barriers of sect, party, rank, and nation, in which men have labored to shut up their love; makes us members of an unbounded family; and establishes sympathies between man and the whole intelligent creation. In the character of Christ, it sets before us moral perfection, that greatest and most quickening miracle in human history, a purity, which shows no stain or touch of the earth, an excellence unborrowed, unconfined, bearing no impress of any age or any nation, the very image of the Universal Father; and it encourages us, by assurances of God's merciful aid, to propose this enlarged, unsullied virtue, as the model and happiness of our moral nature. By the cross of Christ, it sets forth the spirit of self-sacrifice with an energy never known before, and, in thus crucifying selfishness, frees the mind from its worst chain. By Christ's resurrection, it links this short life with eternity, discovers to us in the fleeting present, the germ of an endless future, reveals to us the human mind ascending to other worlds, breathing a freer air, forming higher connexions, and summons us to a force of holy purpose becoming such a destination. To conclude, Christianity everywhere sets before

us God in the character of infinitely free, rich, boundless Grace, in a clemency which is "not overcome by evil, but overcomes evil with good;" and a more animating and ennobling truth, who of us can conceive? I have hardly glanced at what Christianity contains. But who does not see that it was sent from Heaven, to call forth and exalt human nature, and that this is its great glory?

It has been my object in this discourse to lay open a great truth, a central, all-comprehending truth of Christianity. Whoever intelligently and cordially embraces it, obtains a standard by which to try all other doctrines, and to measure the importance of all other truths. Is it so embraced? I fear not. I apprehend that it is dimly discerned by many who acknowledge it, whilst on many more it has hardly dawned. I see other views prevailing, and prevailing in a greater or less degree among all bodies of Christians, and they seem to me among the worst errors of our times. Some of these I would now briefly notice.

1. There are those, who, instead of placing the glory of Christianity in the pure and powerful action which it gives to the human mind, seem to think, that it is rather designed to substitute the activity of another for our own. They imagine the benefit of the religion to be, that it enlists on our side an almighty being who does every thing for us. To disparage human agency, seems to them the essence of piety. They think Christ's glory to consist, not in quickening free agents to act powerfully on themselves, but in changing them by an irresistible energy. They place a Christian's happiness, not so much in powers and affections unfolded in his own breast, as in a foreign care extended over him, in a foreign wisdom which takes the place of his own intelligence. Now,

the great purpose of Christianity is, not to procure or offer to the mind a friend on whom it may passively lean, but to make the mind itself wise, strong, and efficient. Its end is, not that wisdom and strength, as subsisting in another, should do every thing for us, but that these attributes should grow perpetually in our own souls. According to Christianity, we are not carried forward as a weight by a foreign agency; but God, by means suited to our moral nature, quickens and strengthens us to walk ourselves. The great design of Christianity is, to build up in our own souls a power to withstand, to endure, to triumph. Inward vigor is its aim. That we should do most for ourselves and most for others, this is the glory it confers, and in this its happiness is found.

2. I pass to another illustration of the insensibility of men to the great doctrine, that the happiness and glory of Christianity consist in the healthy and lofty frame to which it raises the mind. I refer to the propensity of multitudes to make a wide separation between religion or Christian virtue, and its rewards. That the chief reward lies in the very spirit of religion, they do not dream. They think of being Christians for the sake of something beyond the Christian character, and something more precious. They think that Christ has a greater good to give, than a strong and generous love towards God and mankind; and would almost turn from him with scorn, if they thought him only a benefactor to the mind. It is this low view, which dwarfs the piety of thousands. Multitudes are serving God for wages distinct from the service, and hence superstition, slavishness, and formality are substituted for inward energy and spiritual worship.

3. Men's ignorance of the great truth stated in this

discourse, is seen in the low ideas attached by multitudes to the word, salvation. Ask multitudes, what is the chief evil from which Christ came to save them, and they will tell you, "From hell, from penal fires, from future punishment." Accordingly, they think that salvation is something which another may achieve for them, very much as a neighbour may quench a conflagration that menaces their dwellings and lives. That word, hell, which is used so seldom in the sacred pages, which, in a faithful translation, would not once occur in the writings of Paul, and Peter, and John, which we meet only in four or five discourses of Jesus, and which all persons, acquainted with Jewish geography, know to be a metaphor, a figure of speech, and not a literal expression, this word, by a perverse and exaggerated use, has done unspeakable injury to Christianity. It has possessed and diseased men's imaginations with outward tortures, shrieks, and flames; given them the idea of an outward ruin as what they have chiefly to dread; turned their thoughts to Jesus, as an outward deliverer; and thus blinded them to his true glory, which consists in his setting free and exalting the soul. Men are flying from an outward hell, when in truth they carry within them the hell which they should chiefly dread. The salvation which man chiefly needs, and that which brings with it all other deliverance, is salvation from the evil of his own mind. There is something far worse than outward punishment. It is sin; it is the state of a soul, which has revolted from God, and cast off its allegiance to conscience and the divine word; which renounces its Father, and hardens itself against Infinite Love; which, endued with divine powers, enthralls itself to animal lusts; which makes

gain its god; which has capacities of boundless and ever-growing love, and shuts itself up in the dungeon of private interests; which, gifted with a self-directing power, consents to be a slave, and is passively formed by custom, opinion, and changing events; which, living under God's eye, dreads man's frown or scorn, and prefers human praise to its own calm consciousness of virtue; which tamely yields to temptation, shrinks with a coward's baseness from the perils of duty, and sacrifices its glory and peace in parting with self-control. No ruin can be compared to this. This the impenitent man carries with him beyond the grave, and there meets its natural issue, and inevitable retribution, in remorse, self-torture, and woes unknown on earth. This we cannot too strongly fear. To save, in the highest sense of that word, is to lift the fallen spirit from this depth, to heal the diseased mind, to restore it to energy and freedom of thought, conscience, and love. This was chiefly the salvation for which Christ shed his blood. For this the holy spirit is given; and to this all the truths of Christianity conspire.

4. Another illustration of the error which I am laboring to expose, and which places the glory and importance of Christianity in something besides its quickening influence on the soul, is afforded in the common apprehensions formed of heaven, and of the methods by which it may be obtained. Not a few, I suspect, conceive of heaven as a foreign good. It is a distant country, to which we are to be conveyed by an outward agency. How slowly do men learn, that heaven is the perfection of the mind, and that Christ gives it now just as far as he raises the mind to celestial truth and virtue. It is true, that this word is often used to ex-

press a future felicity; but the blessedness of the future world is only a continuance of what is begun here. There is but one true happiness, that of a mind unfolding its best powers, and attaching itself to great objects; and Christ gives heaven, only in proportion as he gives this elevation of character. The disinterestedness, and moral strength, and filial piety of the Christian, are not mere means of heaven, but heaven itself, and heaven now.

The most exalted idea we can form of the future state is, that it brings and joins us to God. But is not approach to this great being begun on earth? Another delightful view of heaven is, that it unites us with the good and great of our own race, and even with higher orders of beings. But this union is one of spirit, not of mere place; it is accordance of thought and feeling, not an outward relation; and does not this harmony begin even now? and is not virtuous friendship on earth essentially the pleasure which we hope hereafter? What place would be drearier than the future mansions of Christ, to one who should want sympathy with their inhabitants, who could not understand their language, who would feel himself a foreigner there, who would be taught, by the joys which he could not partake, his own loneliness and desolation? These views, I know, are often given with greater or less distinctness; but they seem to me not to have brought home to men the truth, that the fountain of happiness must be in our own souls. Gross ideas of futurity still prevail. I should not be surprised if to some among us the chief idea of heaven were that of a splendor, a radiance, like that which Christ wore on the Mount of Transfiguration. Let us all consider, and it is a great truth,

that heaven has no lustre surpassing that of intellectual and moral worth; and that, were the effulgence of the sun and stars concentrated in the Christian, even this would be darkness, compared with the pure beamings of wisdom, love, and power from his mind. Think not, then, that Christ has come to give heaven as something distinct from virtue. Heaven is the freed and sanctified mind, enjoying God through accordance with his attributes, multiplying its bonds and sympathies with excellent beings, putting forth noble powers, and ministering, in union with the enlightened and holy, to the happiness and virtue of the universe.

My friends, I fear I have been guilty of repetition. But I feel the greatness of the truth which I deliver, and I am anxious to make it plain. Men need to be taught it perpetually. They have always been inclined to look to Christ for something better, as they have dreamed, than the elevation of their own souls. The great purpose of Christianity to unfold and strengthen and lift up the mind, has been perpetually thrown out of sight. In truth, this purpose has been more than overlooked. It has been reversed. The very religion given to exalt human nature, has been used to make it abject. The very religion which was given to create a generous hope, has been made an instrument of servile and torturing fear. The very religion which came from God's goodness to enlarge the human soul with a kindred goodness, has been employed to narrow it to a sect, to rear the Inquisition, and to kindle fires for the martyr. The very religion given to make the understanding and conscience free, has, by a criminal perversion, served to break them into subjection to priests, ministers, and human creeds. Ambition and craft have

seized on the solemn doctrines of an omnipotent God and of future punishment, and turned them into engines against the child, the trembling female, the ignorant adult, until the skeptic has been emboldened to charge on religion the chief miseries and degradation of human nature. It is from a deep and sorrowful conviction of the injuries inflicted on Christianity and on the human soul, by these perversions and errors, that I have reiterated the great truth of this discourse. I would rescue our holy faith from this dishonor. Christianity has no tendency to break the human spirit, or to make man a slave. It has another aim; and as far as it is understood, it puts forth another power. God sent it from heaven, Christ sealed it with his blood, that it might give force of thought and purpose to the human mind, might free it from all fear but the fear of wrong-doing, might make it free of its fellow-beings, might break from it every outward and inward chain.

My hearers, I close with exhorting you to remember this great purpose of our religion. Receive Christianity as given to raise you in the scale of spiritual being. Expect from it no good, any farther than it gives strength and worth to your characters. Think not, as some seem to think, that Christ has a higher gift than purity to bestow, even pardon to the sinner. He does bring pardon. But once separate the idea of pardon from purity; once imagine that forgiveness is possible to him who does not forsake sin; once make it an exemption from outward punishment, and not the admission of the reformed mind to favor and communion with God; and the doctrine of pardon becomes your peril, and a system so teaching it, is fraught with

evil. Expect no good from Christ, any farther than you are exalted by his character and teaching. Expect nothing from his cross, unless a power comes from it, strengthening you to "bear his cross," to "drink his cup," with his own unconquerable love. This is its highest influence. Look not abroad for the blessings of Christ. His reign and chief blessings are within you. The human soul is his kingdom. There he gains his victories, there rears his temples, there lavishes his treasures. His noblest monument is a mind redeemed from iniquity, brought back and devoted to God, forming itself after the perfection of the Saviour, great through its power to suffer for truth, lovely through its meek and gentle virtues. No other monument does Christ desire; for this will endure and increase in splendor, when earthly thrones shall have fallen, and even when the present order of the outward universe shall have accomplished its work, and shall have passed away.

LIKENESS TO GOD.

DISCOURSE

AT THE

ORDINATION OF THE REV. F. A. FARLEY.

PROVIDENCE, R. I. 1828.

EPHESIANS v. 1: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children."

To promote true religion is the purpose of the Christian ministry. For this it was ordained. On the present occasion, therefore, when a new teacher is to be given to the church, a discourse on the character of true religion will not be inappropriate. I do not mean, that I shall attempt, in the limits to which I am now confined, to set before you all its properties, signs, and operations; for in so doing I should burden your memories with divisions and vague generalities, as uninteresting as they would be unprofitable. My purpose is, to select one view of the subject, which seems to me of primary dignity and importance; and I select this, because it is greatly neglected, and because I attribute to this neglect much of the inefficacy, and many of the corruptions, of religion.

The text calls us to follow or imitate God, to seek accordance with or likeness to him; and to do this, not fearfully and faintly, but with the spirit and hope of beloved children. The doctrine which I propose to illustrate, is derived immediately from these words, and is incorporated with the whole New Testament. I affirm, and would maintain, that true religion consists in proposing, as our great end, a growing likeness to the Supreme Being. Its noblest influence consists in making us more and more partakers of the Divinity. For this it is to be preached. Religious instruction should aim chiefly to turn men's aspirations and efforts to that perfection of the soul, which constitutes it a bright image of God. Such is the topic now to be discussed; and I implore Him, whose glory I seek, to aid me in unfolding and enforcing it with simplicity and clearness, with a calm and pure zeal, and with unfeigned charity.

I begin with observing, what all indeed will understand, that the likeness to God, of which I propose to speak, belongs to man's higher or spiritual nature. It has its foundation in the original and essential capacities of the mind. In proportion as these are unfolded by right and vigorous exertion, it is extended and brightened. In proportion as these lie dormant, it is obscured. In proportion as they are perverted and overpowered by the appetites and passions, it is blotted out. In truth, moral evil, if unresisted and habitual, may so blight and lay waste these capacities, that the image of God in man may seem to be wholly destroyed.

The importance of this assimilation to our Creator, is a topic which needs no labored discussion. All men, of whatever name, or sect, or opinion, will meet me

on this ground. All, I presume, will allow, that no good in the compass of the universe, or within the gift of omnipotence, can be compared to a resemblance of God, or to a participation of his attributes. I fear no contradiction here. Likeness to God is the supreme gift. He can communicate nothing so precious, glorious, blessed, as himself. To hold intellectual and moral affinity with the Supreme Being, to partake his spirit, to be his children by derivations of kindred excellence, to bear a growing conformity to the perfection which we adore, this is a felicity which obscures and annihilates all other good.

It is only in proportion to this likeness, that we can enjoy either God or the universe. That God can be known and enjoyed only through sympathy or kindred attributes, is a doctrine which even Gentile philosophy discerned. That the pure in heart can alone see and commune with the pure Divinity, was the sublime instruction of ancient sages as well as of inspired prophets. It is indeed the lesson of daily experience. To understand a great and good being, we must have the seeds of the same excellence. How quickly, by what an instinct, do accordant minds recognise one another! No attraction is so powerful as that which subsists between the truly wise and good; whilst the brightest excellence is lost on those who have nothing congenial in their own breasts. God becomes a real being to us, in proportion as his own nature is unfolded within us. To a man who is growing in the likeness of God, faith begins even here to change into vision. He carries within himself a proof of a Deity, which can only be understood by experience. He more than believes, he feels the Divine presence; and gradually rises to an

intercourse with his Maker, to which it is not irreverent to apply the name of friendship and intimacy. The Apostle John intended to express this truth, when he tells us, that he, in whom a principle of divine charity or benevolence has become a habit and life, "dwells in God and God in him."

It is plain, too, that likeness to God is the true and only preparation for the enjoyment of the universe. In proportion as we approach and resemble the mind of God, we are brought into harmony with the creation; for, in that proportion, we possess the principles from which the universe sprung; we carry within ourselves the perfections, of which its beauty, magnificence, order, benevolent adaptations, and boundless purposes, are the results and manifestations. God unfolds himself in his works to a kindred mind. It is possible, that the brevity of these hints may expose to the charge of mysticism, what seems to me the calmest and clearest truth. I think, however, that every reflecting man will feel, that likeness to God must be a principle of sympathy or accordance with his creation; for the creation is a birth and shining forth of the Divine Mind, a work through which his spirit breathes. In proportion as we receive this spirit, we possess within ourselves the explanation of what we see. We discern more and more of God in every thing, from the frail flower to the everlasting stars. Even in evil, that dark cloud which hangs over the creation, we discern rays of light and hope, and gradually come to see, in suffering and temptation, proofs and instruments of the sublimest purposes of Wisdom and Love.

I have offered these very imperfect views, that I may show the great importance of the doctrine which I am

solicitous to enforce. I would teach, that likeness to God is a good so unutterably surpassing all other good, that whoever admits it as attainable, must acknowledge it to be the chief aim of life. I would show, that the highest and happiest office of religion is, to bring the mind into growing accordance with God; and that by the tendency of religious systems to this end, their truth and worth are to be chiefly tried.

I am aware that it may be said, that the Scriptures, in speaking of man as made in the image of God, and in calling us to imitate him, use bold and figurative language. It may be said, that there is danger from too literal an interpretation; that God is an unapproachable being; that I am not warranted in ascribing to man a like nature to the Divine; that we and all things illustrate the Creator by contrast, not by resemblance; that religion manifests itself chiefly in convictions and acknowledgments of utter worthlessness; and that to talk of the greatness and divinity of the human soul, is to inflate that pride through which Satan fell, and through which man involves himself in that fallen spirit's ruin.

I answer, that, to me, Scripture and reason hold a different language. In Christianity particularly, I meet perpetual testimonies to the divinity of human nature. This whole religion expresses an infinite concern of God for the human soul, and teaches that he deems no methods too expensive for its recovery and exaltation. Christianity, with one voice, calls me to turn my regards and care to the spirit within me, as of more worth than the whole outward world. It calls us to "be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect;" and everywhere, in the sublimity of its precepts, it implies and

recognises the sublime capacities of the being to whom they are addressed. It assures us that human virtue is "in the sight of God of great price," and speaks of the return of a human being to virtue as an event which increases the joy of heaven. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the brightness of his glory, the express and unsullied image of the Divinity, is seen mingling with men as a friend and brother, offering himself as their example, and promising to his true followers a share in all his splendors and joys. In the New Testament, God is said to communicate his own spirit, and all his fulness to the human soul. In the New Testament man is exhorted to aspire after "honor, glory, and immortality"; and Heaven, a word expressing the nearest approach to God, and a divine happiness, is everywhere proposed as the end of his being. In truth, the very essence of Christian faith is, that we trust in God's mercy, as revealed in Jesus Christ, for a state of celestial purity, in which we shall grow for ever in the likeness, and knowledge, and enjoyment of the Infinite Father. Lofty views of the nature of man are bound up and interwoven with the whole Christian system. Say not, that these are at war with humility; for who was ever humbler than Jesus, and yet who ever possessed such a consciousness of greatness and divinity? Say not that man's business is to think of his sin, and not of his dignity; for great sin implies a great capacity; it is the abuse of a noble nature; and no man can be deeply and rationally contrite, but he who feels, that in wrong-doing he has resisted a divine voice, and warred against a divine principle, in his own soul. —I need not, I trust, pursue the argument from revelation. There is an argument

from nature and reason, which seems to me so convincing, and is at the same time so fitted to explain what I mean by man's possession of a like nature to God, that I shall pass at once to its exposition.

That man has a kindred nature with God, and may bear most important and ennobling relations to him, seems to me to be established by a striking proof. This proof you will understand, by considering, for a moment, how we obtain our ideas of God. Whence come the conceptions which we include under that august name? Whence do we derive our knowledge of the attributes and perfections which constitute the Supreme Being? I answer, we derive them from our own souls. The divine attributes are first developed in ourselves, and thence transferred to our Creator. The idea of God, sublime and awful as it is, is the idea of our own spiritual nature, purified and enlarged to infinity. In ourselves are the elements of the Divinity. God, then, does not sustain a figurative resemblance to man. It is the resemblance of a parent to a child, the likeness of a kindred nature.

We call God a Mind. He has revealed himself as a Spirit. But what do we know of mind, but through the unfolding of this principle in our own breasts? That unbounded spiritual energy which we call God, is conceived by us only through consciousness, through the knowledge of ourselves. — We ascribe thought or intelligence to the Deity, as one of his most glorious attributes. And what means this language? These terms we have framed to express operations or faculties of our own souls. The Infinite Light would be for ever hidden from us, did not kindred rays dawn and brighten within us. God is another name for human intelligence raised above

all error and imperfection, and extended to all possible truth.

The same is true of God's goodness. How do we understand this, but by the principle of love implanted in the human breast? Whence is it, that this divine attribute is so faintly comprehended, but from the feeble developement of it in the multitude of men? Who can understand the strength, purity, fulness, and extent of divine philanthropy, but he in whom selfishness has been swallowed up in love?

The same is true of all the moral perfections of the Deity. These are comprehended by us, only through our own moral nature. It is conscience within us, which, by its approving and condemning voice, interprets to us God's love of virtue and hatred of sin; and without conscience, these glorious conceptions would never have opened on the mind. It is the lawgiver in our own breasts, which gives us the idea of divine authority, and binds us to obey it. The soul, by its sense of right, or its perception of moral distinctions, is clothed with sovereignty over itself, and through this alone, it understands and recognises the Sovereign of the Universe. Men, as by a natural inspiration, have agreed to speak of conscience as the voice of God, as the Divinity within us. This principle, reverently obeyed, makes us more and more partakers of the moral perfection of the Supreme Being, of that very excellence, which constitutes the rightfulness of his sceptre, and enthrones him over the universe. Without this inward law, we should be as incapable of receiving a law from Heaven, as the brute. Without this, the thunders of Sinai might startle the outward ear, but would have no meaning, no authority to the mind. I have expressed

here a great truth. Nothing teaches so encouragingly our relation and resemblance to God; for the glory of the Supreme Being is eminently moral. We blind ourselves to his chief splendor, if we think only or mainly of his power, and overlook those attributes of rectitude and goodness, to which he subjects his omnipotence, and which are the foundations and very substance of his universal and immutable Law. And are these attributes revealed to us through the principles and convictions of our own souls? Do we understand through sympathy God's perception of the right, the good, the holy, the just? Then with what propriety is it said, that in his own image he made man!

I am aware, that it may be objected to these views, that we receive our idea of God from the universe, from his works, and not so exclusively from our own souls. The universe, I know, is full of God. The heavens and earth declare his glory. In other words, the effects and signs of power, wisdom, and goodness, are apparent through the whole creation. But apparent to what? Not to the outward eye; not to the acutest organs of sense; but to a kindred mind, which interprets the universe by itself. It is only through that energy of thought, by which we adapt various and complicated means to distant ends, and give harmony and a common bearing to multiplied exertions, that we understand the creative intelligence which has established the order, dependencies, and harmony of nature. We see God around us, because he dwells within us. It is by a kindred wisdom, that we discern his wisdom in his works. The brute, with an eye as piercing as ours, looks on the universe; and the page, which to us is radiant with characters of greatness and goodness, is to

him a blank. In truth, the beauty and glory of God's works, are revealed to the mind by a light beaming from itself. We discern the impress of God's attributes in the universe, by accordance of nature, and enjoy them through sympathy. — I hardly need observe, that these remarks in relation to the universe apply with equal, if not greater force, to revelation.

I shall now be met by another objection, which to many may seem strong. It will be said, that these various attributes of which I have spoken, exist in God in Infinite Perfection, and that this destroys all affinity between the human and the Divine mind. To this I have two replies. In the first place, an attribute, by becoming perfect, does not part with its essence. Love, wisdom, power, and purity do not change their nature by enlargement. If they did, we should lose the Supreme Being through his very infinity. Our ideas of him would fade away into mere sounds. For example, if wisdom in God, because unbounded, have no affinity with that attribute in man, why apply to him that term? It must signify nothing. Let me ask what we mean, when we say that we discern the marks of intelligence in the universe? We mean, that we meet there the proofs of a mind like our own. We certainly discern proofs of no other; so that to deny this doctrine would be to deny the evidences of a God, and utterly to subvert the foundations of religious belief. What man can examine the structure of a plant or an animal, and see the adaptation of its parts to each other and to common ends, and not feel, that it is the work of an intelligence akin to his own, and that he traces these marks of design by the same spiritual energy in which they had their origin?

But I would offer another answer to this objection,

that God's infinity places him beyond the resemblance and approach of man. I affirm, and trust that I do not speak too strongly, that there are traces of infinity in the human mind; and that, in this very respect, it bears a likeness to God. The very conception of infinity, is the mark of a nature to which no limit can be prescribed. This thought, indeed, comes to us, not so much from abroad, as from our own souls. We ascribe this attribute to God, because we possess capacities and wants, which only an unbounded being can fill, and because we are conscious of a tendency in spiritual faculties to unlimited expansion. We believe in the Divine infinity, through something congenial with it in our own breasts. I hope I speak clearly, and if not, I would ask those to whom I am obscure, to pause before they condemn. To me it seems, that the soul, in all its higher actions, in original thought, in the creations of genius, in the soarings of imagination, in its love of beauty and grandeur, in its aspirations after a pure and unknown joy, and especially in disinterestedness, in the spirit of self-sacrifice, and in enlightened devotion, has a character of infinity. There is often a depth in human love, which may be strictly called unfathomable. There is sometimes a lofty strength in moral principle, which all the power of the outward universe cannot overcome. There seems a might within, which can more than balance all might without. There is, too, a piety, which swells into a transport too vast for utterance, and into an immeasurable joy. I am speaking, indeed, of what is uncommon, but still of realities. We see, however, the tendency of the soul to the infinite, in more familiar and ordinary forms. Take, for example, the delight which we find in the vast scenes of nature, in prospects which spread

around us without limits, in the immensity of the heavens and the ocean, and especially in the rush and roar of mighty winds, waves, and torrents, when, amidst our deep awe, a power within seems to respond to the omnipotence around us. The same principle is seen in the delight ministered to us by works of fiction or of imaginative art, in which our own nature is set before us in more than human beauty and power. In truth, the soul is always bursting its limits. It thirsts continually for wider knowledge. It rushes forward to untried happiness. It has deep wants, which nothing limited can appease. Its true element and end is an unbounded good. Thus, God's infinity has its image in the soul; and through the soul, much more than through the universe, we arrive at this conception of the Deity.

In these remarks I have spoken strongly. But I have no fear of expressing too strongly the connexion between the Divine and the human mind. My only fear is, that I shall dishonor the great subject. The danger to which we are most exposed, is that of severing the Creator from his creatures. The propensity of human sovereigns to cut off communication between themselves and their subjects, and to disclaim a common nature with their inferiors, has led the multitude of men, who think of God chiefly under the character of a king, to conceive of him as a being who places his glory in multiplying distinctions between himself and all other beings. The truth is, that the union between the Creator and the creature surpasses all other bonds in strength and intimacy. He penetrates all things, and delights to irradiate all with his glory. Nature, in all its lowest and inanimate forms, is pervaded by his power; and, when quickened by the mysterious property of life, how won-

derfully does it show forth the perfections of its Author! How much of God may be seen in the structure of a single leaf, which, though so frail as to tremble in every wind, yet holds connexions and living communications with the earth, the air, the clouds, and the distant sun, and, through these sympathies with the universe, is itself a revelation of an omnipotent mind! God delights to diffuse himself everywhere. Through his energy, unconscious matter clothes itself with proportions, powers, and beauties, which reflect his wisdom and love. How much more must he delight to frame conscious and happy recipients of his perfections, in whom his wisdom and love may substantially dwell, with whom he may form spiritual ties, and to whom he may be an everlasting spring of moral energy and happiness! How far the Supreme Being may communicate his attributes to his intelligent offspring, I stop not to inquire. But that his almighty goodness will impart to them powers and glories, of which the material universe is but a faint emblem, I cannot doubt. That the soul, if true to itself and its Maker, will be filled with God, and will manifest him, more than the sun, I cannot doubt. Who can doubt it, that believes and understands the doctrine of human immortality?

The views which I have given in this discourse, respecting man's participation of the Divine nature, seem to me to receive strong confirmation, from the title or relation most frequently applied to God in the New Testament; and I have reserved this as the last corroboration of this doctrine, because, to my own mind, it is singularly affecting. In the New Testament God is made known to us as a Father; and a brighter feature of that book cannot be named. Our worship is to be

directed to him as our Father. Our whole religion is to take its character from this view of the Divinity. In this he is to rise always to our minds. And what is it to be a Father? It is to communicate one's own nature, to give life to kindred beings; and the highest function of a Father is to educate the mind of the child, and to impart to it what is noblest and happiest in his own mind. God is our Father, not merely because he created us, or because he gives us enjoyment; for he created the flower and the insect, yet we call him not their Father. This bond is a spiritual one. This name belongs to God, because he frames spirits like himself, and delights to give them what is most glorious and blessed in his own nature. Accordingly, Christianity is said, with special propriety, to reveal God as the Father, because it reveals him as sending his Son to cleanse the mind from every stain, and to replenish it for ever with the spirit and moral attributes of its Author. Separate from God this idea of his creating and training up beings after his own likeness, and you rob him of the paternal character. This relation vanishes, and with it vanishes the glory of the Gospel, and the dearest hopes of the human soul.

The greatest use which I would make of the principles laid down in this discourse, is to derive from them just and clear views of the nature of religion. What, then, is religion? I answer; it is not the adoration of a God with whom we have no common properties; of a distinct, foreign, separate being; but of an all-communicating Parent. It recognises and adores God, as a being whom we know through our own souls, who has made man in his own image, who is the perfection of our

own spiritual nature, who has sympathies with us as kindred beings, who is near us, not in place only like this all-surrounding atmosphere, but by spiritual influence and love, who looks on us with parental interest, and whose great design it is to communicate to us for ever, and in freer and fuller streams, his own power, goodness, and joy. The conviction of this near and ennobling relation of God to the soul, and of his great purposes towards it, belongs to the very essence of true religion; and true religion manifests itself chiefly and most conspicuously in desires, hopes, and efforts corresponding to this truth. It desires and seeks supremely the assimilation of the mind to God, or the perpetual unfolding and enlargement of those powers and virtues by which it is constituted his glorious image. The mind, in proportion as it is enlightened and penetrated by true religion, thirsts and labors for a godlike elevation. What else, indeed, can it seek, if this good be placed within its reach? If I am capable of receiving and reflecting the intellectual and moral glory of my Creator, what else in comparison shall I desire? Shall I deem a property in the outward universe as the highest good, when I may become partaker of the very mind from which it springs, of the prompting love, the disposing wisdom, the quickening power, through which its order, beauty, and beneficent influences subsist? True religion is known by these high aspirations, hopes, and efforts. And this is the religion which most truly honors God. To honor him, is not to tremble before him as an unapproachable sovereign, not to utter barren praise which leaves us as t found us. It is to become what we praise. It is o approach God as an inexhaustible Fountain of light, power, and purity. It is to feel the quickening and

transforming energy of his perfections. It is to thirst for the growth and invigoration of the divine principle within us. It is to seek the very spirit of God. It is to trust in, to bless, to thank him for that rich grace, mercy, love, which was revealed and proffered by Jesus Christ, and which proposes as its great end the perfection of the human soul.

I regard this view of religion as infinitely important. It does more than all things to make our connexion with our Creator ennobling and happy; and, in proportion as we want it, there is danger that the thought of God may itself become the instrument of our degradation. That religion has been so dispensed as to depress the human mind, I need not tell you; and it is a truth which ought to be known, that the greatness of the Deity, when separated in our thoughts from his parental character, especially tends to crush human energy and hope. To a frail, dependent creature, an omnipotent Creator easily becomes a terror, and his worship easily degenerates into servility, flattery, self-contempt, and selfish calculation. Religion only ennobles us, in as far as it reveals to us the tender and intimate connexion of God with his creatures, and teaches us to see in the very greatness which might give alarm, the source of great and glorious communications to the human soul. You cannot, my hearers, think too highly of the majesty of God. But let not this majesty sever him from you. Remember, that his greatness is the infinity of attributes which yourselves possess. Adore his infinite wisdom; but remember that this wisdom rejoices to diffuse itself, and let an exhilarating hope spring up, at the thought of the immeasurable intelligence which such a Father must communicate to his children. In like manner adore his

power. Let the boundless creation fill you with awe and admiration of the energy which sustains it. But remember that God has a nobler work than the outward creation, even the spirit within yourselves; and that it is his purpose to replenish this with his own energy, and to crown it with growing power and triumphs over the material universe. Above all, adore his unutterable goodness. But remember, that this attribute is particularly proposed to you as your model; that God calls you, both by nature and revelation, to a fellowship in his philanthropy; that he has placed you in social relations, for the very end of rendering you ministers and representatives of his benevolence; that he even summons you to espouse and to advance the sublimest purpose of his goodness, the redemption of the human race, by extending the knowledge and power of Christian truth. It is through such views, that religion raises up the soul, and binds man by ennobling bonds to his Maker.

To complete my views of this topic, I beg to add an important caution. I have said that the great work of religion is, to conform ourselves to God, or to unfold the divine likeness within us. Let none infer from this language, that I place religion in unnatural effort, in straining after excitements which do not belong to the present state, or in any thing separate from the clear and simple duties of life. I exhort you to no extravagance. I reverence human nature too much to do it violence. I see too much divinity in its ordinary operations, to urge on it a forced and vehement virtue. To grow in the likeness of God, we need not cease to be men. This likeness does not consist in extraordinary or miraculous gifts, in supernatural additions to the soul, or in any thing foreign to our original constitution; but in our

essential faculties, unfolded by vigorous and conscientious exertion in the ordinary circumstances assigned by God. To resemble our Creator, we need not fly from society, and entrance ourselves in lonely contemplation and prayer. Such processes might give a feverish strength to one class of emotions, but would result in disproportion, distortion, and sickliness of mind. Our proper work is to approach God by the free and natural unfolding of our highest powers, of understanding, conscience, love, and the moral will.

Shall I be told that, by such language, I ascribe to nature the effects which can only be wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit? I anticipate this objection, and wish to meet it by a simple exposition of my views. I would on no account disparage the gracious aids and influences which God imparts to the human soul. The promise of the Holy Spirit is among the most precious in the Sacred Volume. Worlds could not tempt me to part with the doctrine of God's intimate connexion with the mind, and of his free and full communications to it. But these views are in no respect at variance with what I have taught, of the method by which we are to grow in the likeness of God. Scripture and experience concur in teaching, that, by the Holy Spirit, we are to understand a divine assistance adapted to our moral freedom, and accordant with the fundamental truth, that virtue is the mind's own work. By the Holy Spirit, I understand an aid, which must be gained and made effectual by our own activity; an aid, which no more interferes with our faculties, than the assistance which we receive from our fellow-beings; an aid, which silently mingles and conspires with all other helps and means of goodness; an aid, by which we unfold our natural

powers in a natural order, and by which we are strengthened to understand and apply the resources derived from our munificent Creator. This aid we cannot prize too much, or pray for too earnestly. But wherein, let me ask, does it war with the doctrine, that God is to be approached by the exercise and unfolding of our highest powers and affections, in the ordinary circumstances of human life?

I repeat it, to resemble our Maker we need not quarrel with our nature or our lot. Our present state, made up, as it is, of aids and trials, is worthy of God, and may be used throughout to assimilate us to him. For example, our domestic ties, the relations of neighbourhood and country, the daily interchanges of thoughts and feelings, the daily occasions of kindness, the daily claims of want and suffering, these and the other circumstances of our social state, form the best sphere and school for that benevolence, which is God's brightest attribute; and we should make a sad exchange, by substituting for these natural aids, any self-invented artificial means of sanctity. Christianity, our great guide to God, never leads us away from the path of nature, and never wars with the unsophisticated dictates of conscience. We approach our Creator by every right exertion of the powers he gives us. Whenever we invigorate the understanding by honestly and resolutely seeking truth, and by withstanding whatever might warp the judgment; whenever we invigorate the conscience by following it in opposition to the passions; whenever we receive a blessing gratefully, bear a trial patiently, or encounter peril or scorn with moral courage; whenever we perform a disinterested deed; whenever we lift up the heart in true adoration to God; whenever we

war against a habit or desire which is strengthening itself against our higher principles ; whenever we think, speak, or act, with moral energy, and resolute devotion to duty, be the occasion ever so humble, obscure, familiar ; then the divinity is growing within us, and we are ascending towards our Author. True religion thus blends itself with common life. We are thus to draw nigh to God, without forsaking men. We are thus, without parting with our human nature, to clothe ourselves with the divine.

My views on the great subject of this discourse have now been given. I shall close with a brief consideration of a few objections, in the course of which I shall offer some views of the Christian ministry, which this occasion and the state of the world, seem to me to demand. — I anticipate from some an objection to this discourse, drawn as they will say from experience. I may be told, that, I have talked of the godlike capacities of human nature, and have spoken of man as a divinity ; and where, it will be asked, are the warrants of this high estimate of our race ? I may be told that I dream, and that I have peopled the world with the creatures of my lonely imagination. What ! Is it only in dreams, that beauty and loveliness have beamed on me from the human countenance, that I have heard tones of kindness, which have thrilled through my heart, that I have found sympathy in suffering, and a sacred joy in friendship ? Are all the great and good men of past ages only dreams ? Are such names as Moses, Socrates, Paul, Alfred, Milton, only the fictions of my disturbed slumbers ? Are the great deeds of history, the discoveries of philosophy, the creations of genius, only visions ?

O! no. I do not dream when I speak of the divine capacities of human nature. It is a real page in which I read of patriots and martyrs, of Fenelon and Howard, of Hampden and Washington. And tell me not that these were prodigies, miracles, immeasurably separated from their race; for the very reverence, which has treasured up and hallowed their memories, the very sentiments of admiration and love with which their names are now heard, show that the principles of their greatness are diffused through all your breasts. The germs of sublime virtue are scattered liberally on our earth. How often have I seen in the obscurity of domestic life, a strength of love, of endurance, of pious trust, of virtuous resolution, which in a public sphere would have attracted public homage. I cannot but pity the man, who recognises nothing godlike in his own nature. I see the marks of God in the heavens and the earth, but how much more in a liberal intellect, in magnanimity, in unconquerable rectitude, in a philanthropy which forgives every wrong, and which never despairs of the cause of Christ and human virtue. I do and I must reverence human nature. Neither the sneers of a worldly skepticism, nor the groans of a gloomy theology, disturb my faith in its godlike powers and tendencies. I know how it is despised, how it has been oppressed, how civil and religious establishments have for ages conspired to crush it. I know its history. I shut my eyes on none of its weaknesses and crimes. I understand the proofs, by which despotism demonstrates, that man is a wild beast, in want of a master, and only safe in chains. But, injured, trampled on, and scorned as our nature is, I still turn to it with intense sympathy and strong hope. The signatures of its origin

and its end are impressed too deeply to be ever wholly effaced. I bless it for its kind affections, for its strong and tender love. I honor it for its struggles against oppression, for its growth and progress under the weight of so many chains and prejudices, for its achievements in science and art, and still more for its examples of heroic and saintly virtue. These are marks of a divine origin and the pledges of a celestial inheritance; and I thank God that my own lot is bound up with that of the human race.

But another objection starts up. It may be said, "Allow these views to be true; are they fitted for the pulpit? fitted to act on common minds? They may be prized by men of cultivated intellect and taste; but can the multitude understand them? Will the multitude feel them? On whom has a minister to act? On men immersed in business, and buried in the flesh; on men, whose whole power of thought has been spent on pleasure or gain; on men chained by habit and wedded to sin. Sooner may adamant be riven by a child's touch, than the human heart be pierced by refined and elevated sentiment. Gross instruments will alone act on gross minds. Men sleep, and nothing but thunder, nothing but flashes from the everlasting fire of hell, will thoroughly wake them."

I have all along felt that such objections would be made to the views I have urged. But they do not move me. I answer, that I think these views singularly adapted to the pulpit, and I think them full of power. The objection is that they are refined. But I see God accomplishing his noblest purposes by what may be called refined means. All the great agents of nature, attraction, heat, and the principle of life, are refined,

spiritual, invisible, acting gently, silently, imperceptibly; and yet brute matter feels their power, and is transformed by them into surpassing beauty. The electric fluid, unseen, unfelt, and everywhere diffused, is infinitely more efficient, and ministers to infinitely nobler productions, than when it breaks forth in thunder. Much less can I believe, that in the moral world, noise, menace, and violent appeals to gross passions, to fear and selfishness, are God's chosen means of calling forth spiritual life, beauty, and greatness. It is seldom that human nature throws off all susceptibility of grateful and generous impressions, all sympathy with superior virtue; and here are springs and principles to which a generous teaching, if simple, sincere, and fresh from the soul, may confidently appeal.

It is said, men cannot understand the views which seem to me so precious. This objection I am anxious to repel, for the common intellect has been grievously kept down and wronged through the belief of its incapacity. The pulpit would do more good, were not the mass of men looked upon and treated as children. Happily for the race, the time is passing away, in which intellect was thought the monopoly of a few, and the majority were given over to hopeless ignorance. Science is leaving her solitudes to enlighten the multitude. How much more may religious teachers take courage to speak to men on subjects, which are nearer to them than the properties and laws of matter, I mean their own souls. The multitude, you say, want capacity to receive great truths relating to their spiritual nature. But what, let me ask you, is the Christian religion? A spiritual system, intended to turn men's minds upon themselves, to frame them to watchfulness over thought,

imagination, and passion, to establish them in an intimacy with their own souls. What are all the Christian virtues, which men are exhorted to love and seek? I answer, pure and high motions or determinations of the mind. That refinement of thought, which, I am told, transcends the common intellect, belongs to the very essence of Christianity. In confirmation of these views, the human mind seems to me to be turning itself more and more inward, and to be growing more alive to its own worth, and its capacities of progress. The spirit of education shows this, and so does the spirit of freedom. There is a spreading conviction that man was made for a higher purpose than to be a beast of burden, or a creature of sense. The divinity is stirring within the human breast, and demanding a culture and a liberty worthy of the child of God. Let religious teaching correspond to this advancement of the mind. Let it rise above the technical, obscure, and frigid theology which has come down to us from times of ignorance, superstition, and slavery. Let it penetrate the human soul, and reveal it to itself. No preaching, I believe, is so intelligible, as that which is true to human nature, and helps men to read their own spirits.

But the objection which I have stated not only represents men as incapable of understanding, but still more of being moved, quickened, sanctified, and saved, by such views as I have given. If by this objection nothing more is meant, than that these views are not alone or of themselves sufficient, I shall not dispute it; for true and glorious as they are, they do not constitute the whole truth, and I do not expect great moral effects from narrow and partial views of our nature. I have spoken of the godlike capacities of the soul But other

and very different elements enter into the human being. Man has animal propensities as well as intellectual and moral powers. He has a body as well as mind. He has passions to war with reason, and self-love with conscience. He is a free being, and a tempted being, and thus constituted he may and does sin, and often sins grievously. To such a being, religion, or virtue, is a conflict, requiring great spiritual effort, put forth in habitual watchfulness and prayer; and all the motives are needed, by which force and constancy may be communicated to the will. I exhort not the preacher, to talk perpetually of man as "made but a little lower than the angels." I would not narrow him to any class of topics. Let him adapt himself to our whole and various nature. Let him summon to his aid all the powers of this world, and the world to come. Let him bring to bear on the conscience and the heart, God's milder and more awful attributes, the promises and threatenings of the divine word, the lessons of history, the warnings of experience. Let the wages of sin here and hereafter be taught clearly and earnestly. But amidst the various motives to spiritual effort, which belong to the minister, none are more quickening than those drawn from the soul itself, and from God's desire and purpose to exalt it, by every aid consistent with its freedom. These views I conceive are to mix with all others, and without them all others fail to promote a generous virtue. Is it said, that the minister's proper work is, to preach Christ, and not the dignity of human nature? I answer, that Christ's greatness is manifested in the greatness of the nature which he was sent to redeem; and that his chief glory consists in this, that he came to restore God's image where it was obscured or effaced, and to give an everlasting im-

pulse and life to what is divine within us. Is it said, that the malignity of sin is to be the minister's great theme? I answer, that this malignity can only be understood and felt, when sin is viewed as the ruin of God's noblest work, as darkening a light brighter than the sun, as carrying discord, bondage, disease, and death into a mind framed for perpetual progress towards its Author. Is it said, that terror is the chief instrument of saving the soul? I answer, that if by terror, be meant a rational and moral fear, a conviction and dread of the unutterable evil incurred by a mind which wrongs, betrays, and destroys itself, then I am the last to deny its importance. But a fear like this, which regards the debasement of the soul as the greatest of evils, is plainly founded upon and proportioned to our conceptions of the greatness of our nature. The more common terror, excited by vivid images of torture and bodily pain, is a very questionable means of virtue. When strongly awakened, it generally injures the character, breaks men into cowards and slaves, brings the intellect to cringe before human authority, makes man abject before his Maker, and, by a natural reaction of the mind, often terminates in a presumptuous confidence, altogether distinct from virtuous self-respect, and singularly hostile to the unassuming, charitable spirit of Christianity. The preacher should rather strive to fortify the soul against physical pains, than to bow it to their mastery, teaching it to dread nothing in comparison with sin, and to dread sin as the ruin of a noble nature.

Men, I repeat it, are to be quickened and raised by appeals to their highest principles. Even the convicts of a prison may be touched by kindness, generosity, and especially by a tone, look, and address, expressing hope

and respect for their nature. I know, that the doctrine of ages has been, that terror, restraint, and bondage are the chief safeguards of human virtue and peace. But we have begun to learn, that affection, confidence, respect, and freedom are mightier as well as nobler agents. Men can be wrought upon by generous influences. I would that this truth were better understood by religious teachers. From the pulpit, generous influences too seldom proceed. In the church, men too seldom hear a voice to quicken and exalt them. Religion, speaking through her public organs, seems often to forget her natural tone of elevation. The character of God, the principles of his government, his relations to the human family, the purposes for which he brought us into being, the nature which he has given us, and the condition in which he has placed us, these and the like topics, though the sublimest which can enter the mind, are not unfrequently so set forth as to narrow and degrade the hearers, disheartening and oppressing with gloom the timid and sensitive, and infecting coarser minds with the unhallowed spirit of intolerance, presumption, and exclusive pretension to the favor of God. I know, and rejoice to know, that preaching in its worst forms does good; for so bright and piercing is the light of Christianity, that it penetrates in a measure the thickest clouds in which men contrive to involve it. But that evil mixes with the good, I also know; and I should be unfaithful to my deep convictions, did I not say, that human nature requires for its elevation, more generous treatment from the teachers of religion.

I conclude with saying, let the minister cherish a reverence for his own nature. Let him never despise it even in its most forbidding forms. Let him delight in

its beautiful and lofty manifestations. Let him hold fast as one of the great qualifications for his office, a faith in the greatness of the human soul, that faith, which looks beneath the perishing body, beneath the sweat of the laborer, beneath the rags and ignorance of the poor, beneath the vices of the sensual and selfish, and discerns in the depths of the soul a divine principle, a ray of the Infinite Light, which may yet break forth and "shine as the sun" in the kingdom of God. Let him strive to awaken in men a consciousness of the heavenly treasure within them, a consciousness of possessing what is of more worth than the outward universe. Let hope give life to all his labors. Let him speak to men, as to beings liberally gifted, and made for God. Let him always look round on a congregation with the encouraging trust, that he has hearers prepared to respond to the simple, unaffected utterance of great truths, and to the noblest workings of his own mind. Let him feel deeply for those, in whom the divine nature is overwhelmed by the passions. Let him sympathize tenderly with those, in whom it begins to struggle, to mourn for sin, to thirst for a new life. Let him guide and animate to higher and diviner virtue, those in whom it has gained strength. Let him strive to infuse courage, enterprise, devout trust, and an inflexible will, into men's labors for their own perfection. In one word, let him cherish an unfaltering and growing faith in God as the Father and quickener of the human mind, and in Christ as its triumphant and immortal friend. That by such preaching he is to work miracles, I do not say. That he will rival in sudden and outward effects what is wrought by the preachers of a low and terrifying theology, I do not expect or desire. That all will be made better, I am far from believing.

His office is, to act on free beings, who, after all, must determine themselves; who have power to withstand all foreign agency; who are to be saved, not by mere preaching, but by their own prayers and toil. Still I believe that such a minister will be a benefactor beyond all praise to the human soul. I believe, and know, that, on those who will admit his influence, he will work deeply, powerfully, gloriously. His function is the sublimest under heaven; and his reward will be, a growing power of spreading truth, virtue, moral strength, love, and happiness, without limit and without end.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

DISCOURSE

AT

THE DEDICATION OF DIVINITY HALL,

CAMBRIDGE, 1826.

LUKE iv. 32: "His word was with power."

WE are assembled to set apart and consecrate this building to the education of teachers of the Christian religion. Regarding, as we do, this religion as God's best gift to mankind, we look on these simple walls, reared for this holy and benevolent work, with an interest, which more splendid edifices, dedicated to inferior purposes, would fail to inspire. We thank God for the zeal which has erected them. We thank him for the hope, that here will be trained, and hence will go forth, able ministers of the New Testament. God accept our offering and fulfil our trust. May he shed on this spot the copious dew of his grace, and compass it with his favor as with a shield.

To what end do we devote this building? How may this end be accomplished? These questions will guide our present reflections.

To what end is this edifice dedicated? The answer to this question may be given in various forms or expanded into various particulars. From this wide range of topics, I shall select one, which from its comprehensiveness and importance, will be acknowledged to deserve peculiar attention. I say, then, that this edifice is dedicated to the training of ministers, whose word, like their Master's, shall be "*with power.*" Power, energy, efficiency, that is the endowment to be communicated most assiduously by a theological institution. Such is the truth, which I would now develope. My meaning may easily be explained. By the power, of which I have spoken, I mean that strong action of the understanding, conscience, and heart, on moral and religious truth, through which the preacher is quickened and qualified to awaken the same strong action in others. I mean energy of thought and feeling in the minister, creating for itself an appropriate expression, and propagating itself to the hearer. What this power is all men understand by experience. All know, how the same truth differs, when dispensed by different lips; how doctrines, inert and uninteresting as expounded by one teacher, come fraught with life from another; arrest attention, rouse emotion, and give a new spring to the soul. In declaring this power to be the great object of a theological institution, I announce no discovery. I say nothing new. But this truth, like many others, is too often acknowledged only to be slighted. It needs to be brought out, to be made prominent, to become the living, guiding principle of education for the ministry. Power, then, I repeat it, is the great good to be communicated by theological institutions. To impart knowledge is indeed their indispensable duty, but not their

whole, nor most arduous, nor highest work. Knowledge is the means, power the end. The former, when accumulated, as it often is, with no strong action of the intellect, no vividness of conception, no depth of conviction, no force of feeling, is of little or no worth to the preacher. It comes from him as a faint echo, with nothing of that mysterious energy, which strong conviction throws into style and utterance. His breath, which should kindle, chills his hearers, and the nobler the truth with which he is charged, the less he succeeds in carrying it far into men's souls. We want more than knowledge. We want force of thought, feeling, and purpose. What profits it to arm the pupil with weapons of heavenly temper, unless his hands be nerved to wield them with vigor and success? The word of God is indeed "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword;" but when committed to him who has no kindred energy, it does not and cannot penetrate the mind. Power is the attribute, which crowns all a minister's accomplishments. It is the centre and grand result, in which all his studies, meditations, and prayers should meet, and without which his office becomes a form and a show. And yet how seldom is it distinctly and earnestly proposed as the chief qualification for the sacred office! How seldom do we meet it! How often does preaching remind us of a child's arrows shot against a fortress of adamant. How often does it seem a mock fight. We do not see the earnestness of real warfare; of men bent on the accomplishment of a great good. We want powerful ministers, not graceful declaimers, not elegant essayists, but men fitted to act on men, to make themselves *felt* in society.

I have said that the communication of power is the

great end of a theological institution. Let not this word give alarm. I mean by it, as you must have seen, a very different power from that which ministers once possessed, and which some still covet. There have been times, when the clergy were rivals in dominion with kings; when the mitre even towered above the diadem; when the priest, shutting God's word on the people, and converting its threatenings and promises into instruments of usurpation, was able to persuade men, that the soul's everlasting doom hung on his ministry, and even succeeded in establishing a sway over fiery and ferocious spirits, which revolted against all other control. This power, suited to barbarous times, and, as some imagine, a salutary element of society in rude, lawless ages, has been shaken almost everywhere by the progress of intellect; and in Protestant countries, it is openly reprobated and renounced. It is not to reëstablish this, that these walls have been reared. We trust, that they are to be bulwarks against its encroachments, and that they are to send forth influences more and more hostile to every form of spiritual usurpation.

Am I told that this kind of power is now so fallen and so contemned, that to disclaim or to oppose it seems a waste of words? I should rejoice to yield myself to this belief. But unhappily the same enslaving and degrading power may grow up under Protestant as under Catholic institutions. In all ages and all churches, terror confers a tremendous influence on him who can spread it; and, through this instrument, the Protestant minister, whilst disclaiming Papal pretensions, is able, if so minded, to build up a spiritual despotism. That this means of subjugating the mind should be too freely used and dreadfully perverted, we

cannot wonder, when we consider that no talent is required to spread a panic, and that coarse minds and hard hearts are signally gifted for this work of torture. The progress of intelligence is undoubtedly narrowing the power, which the minister gains by excessive appeals to men's fears, but has by no means destroyed it; for as yet the intellect, even in Protestant countries, has exerted itself comparatively little on religion; and, ignorance begetting a passive, servile state of mind, the preacher, if so disposed, finds little difficulty in breaking some, if not many, spirits by terror. The effects of this ill-gotten power are mournful on the teacher and the taught. The panic-smitten hearer, instructed that safety is to be found in bowing to an unintelligible creed, and too agitated for deliberate and vigorous thought, resigns himself a passive subject to his spiritual guides, and receives a faith by which he is debased. Nor does the teacher escape unhurt; for all usurpation on men's understandings begets, in him who exercises it, a dread and resistance of the truth which threatens its subversion. Hence ministers have so often fallen behind their age, and been the chief foes of the master spirits who have improved the world. They have felt their power totter at the tread of an independent thinker. By a kind of instinct, they have fought against the light, before which the shades of superstition were vanishing, and have received their punishment in the darkness and degradation of their own minds. To such power as we have described, we do not dedicate these walls. We would not train here, if we could, agents of terror, to shake weak nerves, to disease the imagination, to lay a spell on men's faculties, to guard a creed by fires more consuming than those which burned on Sinai

Believing that this method of dominion is among the chief obstructions to an enlightened faith, and abhorring tyranny in the pulpit as truly as on the throne, we would consecrate this edifice to the subversion, not the participation, of this unhallowed power.

Is it then asked, what I mean by the power which this institution should aim to communicate? I mean power to act on intelligent and free beings, by means proportioned to their nature. I mean power to call into healthy exertion the intellect, conscience, affections, and moral will of the hearer. I mean force of conception, and earnestness of style and elocution. I mean, that truth should be a vital principle in the soul of the teacher, and should come from him as a reality. I mean, that his whole moral and intellectual faculties should be summoned to his work; that a tone of force and resolution should pervade his efforts; that, throwing his soul into his cause, he should plead it with urgency, and should concentrate on his hearers all the influences which consist with their moral freedom.

Every view which we can take of the ministry will teach us, that nothing less than the whole amount of power in the individual can satisfy its demands. This we learn, if we consider, first, the weight and grandeur of the subjects which the minister is to illustrate and enforce. He is to speak of God, the King and Father Eternal, whose praise no tongue of men or angels can worthily set forth. He is to speak of the soul, that ray of the Divinity, the partaker of God's own immortality, to which the outward universe was made to minister, and which, if true to itself, will one day be clad with a beauty and grandeur such as nature's loveliest and

sublimest scenery never wears. He is to speak, not of this world only, but of invisible and more advanced states of being; of a world too spiritual for the fleshly eye to see, but of which a presage and earnest may be found in the enlightened and purified mind. He has to speak of virtue, of human perfection, of the love which is due to the Universal Father and to fellow-beings, of the intercourse of the soul with its Creator, and of all the duties of life as hallowed and elevated by a reference to God and to the future world. He has to speak of sin, that essential evil, that only evil, which, by its unutterable fearfulness, makes all other calamities unworthy of the name. He is to treat, not of ordinary life, nor of the most distinguished agents in ordinary history, but of God's supernatural interpositions; of his most sensible and immediate providence; of men inspired and empowered to work the most important revolutions in society; and especially of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the theme of prophecy, the revealer of grace and truth, the Saviour from sin, the conqueror of death, who hath left us an example of immaculate virtue, whose love passeth knowledge, and whose history, combining the strange and touching contrasts of the cross, the resurrection, and a heavenly throne, surpasses all other records in interest and grandeur. He has to speak, not of transitory concerns but of happiness and misery transcending in duration and degree the most joyful and suffering condition of the present state. He has to speak of the faintly shadowed, but solemn consummation of this world's eventful history; of the coming of the Son of Man, the resurrection, the judgment, the retributions of the last day. Here are subjects of intense interest. They claim and should call forth the

mind's whole power, and are infinitely wronged when uttered with cold lips and from an unmoved heart.

If we next consider the effects, which, through these truths, the minister is to produce, we shall see that his function demands and should be characterized by power. The first purpose of a minister's function, which is to enlighten the understanding on the subject of religion, is no easy task; for all religious truth is not obvious, plain, shining with an irresistible evidence, so that a glance of thought will give the hearer possession of the teacher's mind. We sometimes talk, indeed, of the simplicity of religion, as if it were as easy as a child's book, as if it might be taught with as little labor as the alphabet. But all analogy forbids us to believe, that the sublimest truths can be imparted or gained with little thought or effort, and the prevalent ignorance confirms this presumption. Obstacles neither few nor small to a clear apprehension of religion, are found in the invisibleness of its objects; in the disproportion between the Infinite Creator and the finite mind; in the proneness of human beings to judge of superior natures by their own, and to transfer to the spiritual world the properties of matter and the affections of sense; in the perpetual pressure of outward things upon the attention; in the darkness which sin spreads over the intellect; in the ignorance which yet prevails in regard to the human mind; and, though last not least, in the errors and superstitions which have come down to us from past ages, and which exert an unsuspected power on our whole modes of religious thinking. These obstacles are strengthened by the general indisposition to investigate religion freely and thoroughly. The tone of authority with which it has been taught, the terror and

obscure phraseology in which it has been shrouded, and the unlovely aspect which it has been made to wear, have concurred to repel from it deliberate and earnest attention, and to reconcile men to a superficial mode of thinking which they would scorn on every other subject. Add to this, that the early inculcation and frequent repetition of religion, by making it familiar, expose it to neglect. The result of all these unfavorable influences, is, that religious truth is more indistinctly apprehended, is more shadowy and unreal to the multitude, than any other truth; and, unhappily, this remark applies with almost equal truth to all ranks of society and all orders of intellect. The loose conceptions of Christianity which prevail among the high as well as the low, do not deserve the name of knowledge. The loftiest minds among us seldom put forth their strength on the very subject, for which intelligence was especially given. A great revolution is needed here. The human intellect is to be brought to act on religion with new power. It ought to prosecute this inquiry with an intenseness, with which no other subject is investigated. And does it require no energy in the teacher, to awaken this power and earnestness of thought in others, to bring religion before the intellect as its worthiest object, to raise men's traditional, lifeless, superficial faith into deliberate, profound conviction?

That the ministry should be characterized by power and energy, will be made more apparent, if we consider that it is instituted to quicken, not only the intellect but the conscience; to enforce the obligations, as well as illustrate the truth, of religion. It is an important branch of the minister's duty, to bring home the general principles of duty to the individual mind; to turn it upon

itself; to rouse it to a resolute, impartial survey of its whole responsibilities and ill deserts. And is not energy needed to break through the barriers of pride and self-love, and to place the individual before a tribunal in his own breast, as solemn and searching as that which awaits him at the last day? It is not indeed so difficult to rouse, in the timid and susceptible, a morbid susceptibility of conscience, to terrify weak people into the idea, that they are to answer for sins inherited from the first fallen pair, and entailed upon them by a stern necessity. But this feverish action of the conscience is its weakness, not its strength; and the teacher who would rouse the moral sense to discriminating judgment and healthful feeling, has need of a vastly higher kind of power than is required to darken and disease it.

Another proof that the ministry should be characterized by power, is given to us by the consideration, that it is intended to act on the affections; to exhibit religion in its loveliness and venerableness, as well as in its truth and obligation; to concentrate upon it all the strength of moral feeling. The Christian teacher has a great work to do in the human heart. His function has, for its highest aim, to call forth towards God the profoundest awe, attachment, trust, and joy, of which human nature is capable. Religion demands, that He who is supreme in the universe, should be supreme in the human soul. God, to whom belongs the mysterious and incommunicable attribute of Infinity; who is the fulness and source of life and thought, of beauty and power, of love and happiness; on whom we depend more intimately than the stream on the fountain, or the plant on the earth in which it is rooted, — this Great Being ought to call forth peculiar emotions, and to move

and sway the soul, as he pervades creation, with unrivalled energy. It is his distinction, that he unites in his nature infinite majesty and infinite benignity, the most awful with the most endearing attributes, the tenderest relations to the individual with the grandeur of the universal sovereign; and, through this nature, he is fitted to act on the mind as no other being can, — to awaken a love more intense, a veneration more profound, a sensibility of which the soul knows not its capacity until it is penetrated and touched by God. To bring the created mind into living union with the Infinite Mind, so that it shall respond to him through its whole being, is the noblest function, which this harmonious and beneficent universe performs. For this, revelation was given. For this, the ministry was instituted. The Christian teacher is to make more audible, and to interpret, the voice in which the beauty and awfulness of nature, the heavens, the earth, fruitful seasons, storms and thunders, recall men to their Creator. Still more, he is to turn them to the clearer, milder, more attractive splendors, in which the Divinity is revealed by Jesus Christ. His great purpose, I repeat it, is, to give vitality to the thought of God in the human mind; to make his presence felt; to make him a reality, and the most powerful reality to the soul. And is not this a work requiring energy of thought and utterance? Is it easy, in a world of matter and sense, amidst crowds of impressions rushing in from abroad, amidst the constant and visible agency of second causes, amidst the anxieties, toils, pleasures, dissipations, and competitions of life, in the stir and bustle of society, and in an age when luxury wars with spirituality, and the developement of nature's resources is turning men's trust from the Creator, — is

it easy, amidst these gross interests and distracting influences, to raise men's minds to the invisible Divinity, to fix impressions of God deeper and more enduring than those which are received from all other beings, to make him the supreme object, spring, and motive of the soul?

We have seen how deep and strong are the affections which the minister is to awaken towards God. But *strength* of religious impression is not his whole work. From the imperfections of our nature, this very strength has its dangers. Religion, in becoming fervent, often becomes morbid. It is the minister's duty to inculcate a piety characterized by wisdom as much as by warmth; to meditate, if I may so speak, between the reason and the affections, so that, with joint energy and in blessed harmony, they may rise together and offer up the undivided soul to God. Whoever understands the strength of emotion in man's nature, and how hardly the balance of the soul is preserved, need not be told of the arduousness of this work. Devout people, through love of excitement, and through wrong views of the love of God, are apt to cherish the devotional feelings, at the expense, if not to the exclusion, of other parts of our nature. They seem to imagine that piety, like the Upas tree, makes a desert where it grows; that the mind, if not the body, needs a cloister. The natural movements of the soul are repressed; the social affections damped; the grace, and ornament, and innocent exhilarations of life frowned upon; and a gloomy, repulsive religion is cultivated, which, by way of compensation for its privations, claims a monopoly of God's favor, abandoning all to his wrath who will not assume its own sad livery and echo its own sepulchral tones. Through such exhibitions, religion has lost its honor; and, though the

most ennobling of all sentiments, dilating the soul with vast thoughts and an unbounded hope, has been thought to contract and degrade it. The minister is to teach an earnest but enlightened religion ; a piety, which, far from wasting or eradicating, will protect, nourish, freshen the mind's various affections and powers ; which will add force to reason, as well as ardor to the heart ; which will at once bind us to God, and cement and multiply our ties to our families, our country, and mankind ; which will heighten the relish of life's pleasures, whilst it kindles an unquenchable thirst for a purer happiness in the life to come. Religion does not mutilate our nature. It does not lay waste our human interests and affections, that it may erect for God a throne amidst cheerless and solitary ruins, but widens the range of thought, feeling, and enjoyment. Such is religion ; and the Christian ministry, having for its end the communication of this healthful, well-proportioned, and all-comprehending piety, demands every energy of thought, feeling, and utterance, which the individual can bring to the work.

The time would fail me to speak of the other affections and sentiments which the ministry is instituted to excite and cherish, and I hasten to another object of the Christian teacher, which, to those who know themselves, will peculiarly illustrate the power which his office demands. It is his duty to rouse men to self-conflict, to warfare with the evil in their own hearts. This is in truth the supreme evil. The sorest calamities of life, sickness, poverty, scorn, dungeons, and death, form a less amount of desolation and suffering than is included in that one word, sin, —in revolt from God, in disloyalty to conscience, in the tyranny of the passions, in the

thraldom of the soul's noblest powers. To redeem men from sin was Christ's great end. To pierce them with a new consciousness of sin, so that they shall groan under it, and strive against it, and through prayer and watching master it, is an essential part of the minister's work. Let him not satisfy himself with awakening, by his eloquence, occasional emotions of gratitude or sympathy. He must rouse the soul to solemn, stern resolve against its own deep and cherished corruptions, or he only makes a show of assault, and leaves the foe intrenched and unbroken within. We see, then, the arduousness of the minister's work. He is called to war with the might of the human passions, with the whole power of moral evil. He is to enlist men, not for a crusade, nor for extermination of heretics, but to fight a harder battle within, to expel sin in all its forms, and especially their besetting sins, from the strongholds of the heart. I know no task so arduous, none which demands equal power.

I shall take but one more view of the objects for which the Christian ministry was instituted, and from which we infer that it should be fraught with energy. It is the duty of the Christian teacher to call forth in the soul a conviction of its immortality, a thirst for a higher existence, and a grandeur and elevation of sentiment, becoming a being who is to live, enjoy, and advance for ever. His business is with men, not as inhabitants of this world, but as related to invisible beings, and to purer and happier worlds. The minister should look with reverence on the human soul as having within itself the germ of heaven. He should recognise, in the ignorant and unimproved, vast spiritual faculties given for perpetual enlargement, just as the artist of

genius sees in the unhewn marble the capacity of being transformed into a majesty and grace, which will command the admiration of ages. In correspondence with these views, let him strive to quicken men to a consciousness of their inward nature and of its affinity with God, and to raise their steadfast aim and hope to its interminable progress and felicity. Such is his function. Perhaps I may be told, that men are incapable of rising, under the best instruction, to this height of thought and feeling. But let us never despair of our race. There is, I am sure, in the human soul, a deep consciousness, which responds to him who sincerely, and with the language of reality, speaks to it of the great and everlasting purposes for which it was created. There are sublime instincts in man. There is in human nature, a want which the world cannot supply; a thirst for objects on which to pour forth more fervent admiration and love, than visible things awaken; a thirst for the unseen, the infinite, and the everlasting. Most of you who hear have probably had moments, when a new light has seemed to dawn, a new life to stir within you; when you have aspired after an unknown good; when you have been touched by moral greatness and disinterested love; when you have longed to break every chain of selfishness and sensuality, and enjoy a purer being. It is on this part of our nature that religion is founded. To this Christianity is addressed. The power to speak to this, is the noblest which God has imparted to man or angel, and should be coveted above all things by the Christian teacher.

The need of power in the ministry has been made apparent, from the greatness of the truths to be dispensed and the effects to be wrought by the Christian

teacher. The question then comes, How may the student of theology be aided in gaining or cherishing this power? Under what influences should he be placed? What are the springs or foundations of the energy which he needs? How may he be quickened and trained to act most efficiently on the minds of men? In answering these questions, we of course determine the character which belongs to a theological institution, the spirit which it should cherish, the discipline, the mode of teaching, the excitements, which it should employ. From this wide range, I shall select a few topics which are recommended at once by their own importance and by the circumstances in which we are now placed.

1. To train the student to power of thought and utterance, let him be left, and, still more, encouraged, to free investigation. Without this a theological institution becomes a prison to the intellect and a nuisance to the church. The mind grows by free action. Confine it to beaten paths, prescribe to it the results in which all study must end, and you rob it of elasticity and life. It will never spread to its full dimensions. Teach the young man, that the instructions of others are designed to quicken, not supersede his own activity; that he has a divine intellect for which he is to answer to God, and that to surrender it to another, is to cast the crown from his head, and to yield up his noblest birthright. Encourage him, in all great questions, to hear both sides, and to meet fairly the point of every hostile argument. Guard him against tampering with his own mind, against silencing its whispers and objections, that he may enjoy a favorite opinion undisturbed. Do not give him the shadow for the substance of freedom, by telling him to inquire, but prescribing to him

the convictions at which he must stop. Better show him honestly his chains, than mock the slave with the show of liberty.

I know the objection to this course. Its puts to hazard, we are told, the religious principles of the young. The objection is not without foundation. The danger is not unreal. But I know no method of forming a manly intellect, or a manly character, without danger. Peril is the element in which power is developed. Remove the youth from every hazard, keep him in leading-strings lest he should stray into forbidden paths, surround him with down lest he should be injured by a fall, shield him from wind and storms, and you doom him to perpetual infancy. All liberty is perilous, as the despot truly affirms; but who would therefore seek shelter under a despot's throne? Freedom of will is almost a tremendous gift; but still, a free agent, with all his capacity of crime, is infinitely more interesting and noble than the most harmonious and beautiful machine. Freedom is the nurse of intellectual and moral vigor. Better expose the mind to error, than rob it of hardihood and individuality. Keep not the destined teacher of mankind from the perilous field, where the battle between Truth and Falsehood is fought. Let him grapple with difficulty, sophistry, and error. Truth is a conquest, and no man holds her so fast as he who has won her by conflict.

That cases of infidelity may occur in institutions conducted on free principles, is very possible, though our own experience gives no ground for fear. But the student, who, with all the aids to Christian belief which are furnished in a theological seminary, still falls a prey to skepticism, is not the man to be trusted with the cause

of Christ. He is radically deficient. He wants that congeniality with spiritual and lofty truths, without which the evidences of religion work no deep conviction, and without which the faith that might be instilled by a slavish institution, would be of little avail. An upright mind may indeed be disturbed and shaken for a time by the arguments of skepticism; but these will be ultimately repelled, and, like conquered foes, will strengthen the principle by which they have been subdued.

Nothing, I am sure, can give power like a free action of the mind. Accumulate teachers and books, for these are indispensable. But the best teacher is he who awakens in his pupils the power of thought, and aids them to go alone. It is possible to weaken and encumber the mind by too much help. The very splendor of a teacher's talents may injure the pupil; and a superior man, who is more anxious to spread his own creed and his own praise, than to nourish a strong intellect in others, will only waste his life in multiplying poor copies, and in sending forth into the churches tame mimics of himself.

To free inquiry, then, we dedicate these walls. We invite into them the ingenuous young man, who prizes liberty of mind more than aught within the gift of sects or of the world. Let Heaven's free air circulate, and Heaven's unobstructed light shine here, and let those who shall be sent hence, go forth, not to echo with servility a creed imposed on their weakness, but to utter, in their own manly tones, what their own free investigation and deep conviction urge them to preach as the truth of God.

2. In the second place, to give power to the teacher,

he should be imbued, by all possible inculcation and excitement, with a supreme and invincible love of truth. This is at once the best defence against the perils of free inquiry, and the inspirer of energy both in thought and utterance. The first duty of a rational being is to his own intellect; for it is through soundness and honesty of intellect that he is to learn all other duties. I know no virtue more important and appropriate to a teacher, and especially a religious teacher, than fairness and rectitude of understanding, than a love of truth stronger than the love of gain, honor, life; and yet, so far from being cherished, this virtue has been warred against, hunted down, driven to exile, or doomed to the stake, in almost every Christian country, by ministers, churches, religious seminaries, or a maddened populace. In the glorious company of heroes and martyrs, a high rank belongs to him, who, superior to the frowns or the sneers, the pity or the wrath, which change of views would bring upon him, and in opposition to the warping influences of patronage, of private friendship, or ambition, keeps his mind chaste, inviolate, a sacred temple for truth, ever open to new light from Heaven; and who, faithful to his deliberate convictions, speaks simply, and firmly, what his uncorrupted mind believes. This love of truth gives power, for it secures a growing knowledge of truth; and truth is the mighty weapon by which the victories of religion are to be wrought out. This endures, whilst error carries with it the seeds of decay. Truth is an emanation from God, a beam of his wisdom, and immutable as its source; and, although its first influences may seem to be exceeded by those of error, it grows stronger, and strikes deeper root, amidst the fluctuations and ruins of false opinions. Besides, this loyal-

ty to truth not only leads to its acquisition, but, still more, begets a vital acquaintance with it, a peculiar conviction, which gives directness, energy, and authority to teaching. A minister, who has been religiously just to his own understanding, speaks with a tone of reality, of calm confidence, of conscious uprightness, which cannot be caught by the servile repeater of other men's notions, or by the passionate champion of an unexamined creed. A look, an accent, a word, from a single-hearted inquirer after truth, expressing his deliberate convictions, has a peculiar power in fortifying the convictions of others. To the love of truth, then, be these walls consecrated, and here may every influence be combined to build it up in the youthful heart.

3. To train powerful ministers, let an institution avail itself of the means of forming a devotional spirit, and imbuing the knowledge of the student with religious sensibility. Every man knows, that a cultivated mind, under strong and generous emotion, acquires new command of its resources, new energy and fulness of thought and expression; whilst, in individuals of a native vigor of intellect, feeling almost supplies the place of culture, inspiring the unlettered teacher with a fervid, resistless eloquence, which no apparatus of books, teachers, criticism, ancient languages, and general literature can impart. This power of sensibility to fertilize and vivify the intellect is not difficult of explanation. A strong and pure affection concentrates the attention on its objects, fastens on them the whole soul, and thus gives vividness of conception. It associates, intimately, all the ideas which are congenial with itself, and thus causes a rush of thought into the mind in moments of excitement. Indeed, a strong emotion seems to stir up the

soul from its foundations, and to attract to itself, and to impregnate with its own fire, whatever elements, conceptions, illustrations, can be pressed into its own service. Hence it is, that even ordinary men, strongly moved, abound in arguments, analogies, and fervent appeals, which nothing but sensibility could have taught. Every minister can probably recollect periods, when devotional feeling has seemed to open a new fountain of thought in the soul. Religious affection instinctively seeks and seizes the religious aspect of things. It discerns the marks of God, and proofs and illustrations of divine truth, in all nature and providence; and seems to surround the mind with an atmosphere which spreads its own warm hues on every object which enters it. This attraction, or affinity, if I may so say, which an emotion establishes among the thoughts which accord with itself, is one of the very important laws of the mind, and is chiefly manifested in poetry, eloquence, and all the higher efforts of intellect, by which man sways his fellow-beings. Religious feeling, then, is indispensable to a powerful minister. Without it, learning and fancy may please, but cannot move men profoundly and permanently. It is this, which not only suggests ideas, but gives felicity and energy of expression. It prompts "the words that burn"; those mysterious combinations of speech, which send the speaker's soul like lightning through his hearers, which breathe new life into old and faded truths, and cause an instantaneous gush of thought and feeling in susceptible minds.

We dedicate this institution, then, to religious feeling. Here let the heart muse, till the fire burns. Here let prayer, joined with meditation on nature and Scripture, and on the fervid writings of devout men, awaken the

whole strength of the affections. But on no point is caution more needed than on this. Let it never be forgotten, that we want genuine feeling; not its tones, looks, and gestures, not a forced ardor and factitious zeal. Woe to that institution, where the young man is expected to repeat the language of emotion, whether he feel it or not; where perpetual pains are taken, to chafe the mind to a warmth which it cannot sustain. The affections are delicate and must not be tampered with. They cannot be compelled. Hardly any thing is more blighting to genuine sensibility, than to assume its tones and badge where it does not exist. Exhort the student to cherish devout feeling, by intercourse with God, and with those whom God has touched. But exhort him as strenuously, to abstain from every sign of emotion which the heart does not prompt. Teach him that nothing grieves more the Holy Spirit, or sooner closes the mind against heavenly influences, than insincerity. Teach him to be simple, ingenuous, true to his own soul. Better be cold, than affect to feel. In truth, nothing is so cold as an assumed, noisy enthusiasm. Its best emblem is the northern blast of winter, which freezes as it roars. Be this spot sacred to Christian ingenuousness and sincerity. Let it never be polluted by pretence, by affected fervor, by cant and theatric show.

4. Another source of power in the ministry, is Faith; by which we mean, not a general belief in the truths of Christianity, but a confidence in the great results, which this religion and the ministry are intended to promote. It has often been observed, that a strong faith tends to realize its objects; that all things become possible to him who thinks them so. Trust and hope breathe

animation and force. He, who despairs of great effects, never accomplishes them. All great works have been the results of a strong confidence, inspiring and sustaining strong exertion. The young man, who cannot conceive of higher effects of the ministry than he now beholds, who thinks that Christianity has spent all its energies in producing the mediocrity of virtue which characterizes Christendom, and to whom the human soul seems to have put forth its whole power and to have reached its full growth in religion, has no call to the ministry. Let not such a man put forth his nerveless hands in defence of the Christian cause. A voice of confidence has been known to rally a retreating army, and to lead it back to victory; and this spirit-stirring tone belongs to the leaders of the Christian host. The minister, indeed, ought to see and feel, more painfully than other men, the extent and power of moral evil in individuals, in the church, and in the world. Let him weep over the ravages of sin. But let him feel, too, that the mightiest power of the universe is on the side of truth and virtue; and with sorrow and fear let him join an unfaltering trust in the cause of human nature. Let him look on men, as on mysterious beings, endued with a spiritual life, with a deep central principle of holy and disinterested love, with an intellectual and moral nature which was made to be receptive of God. To nourish this hopeful spirit, this strengthening confidence, it is important that the minister should understand and feel, that he is not acting alone in his efforts for religion, but in union with God and Christ, and good beings on earth and in heaven. Let him regard the spiritual renovation of mankind, as God's chief purpose, for which nature and providence are leagued in holy coöperation. Let

him feel himself joined in counsel and labor, with that great body of which Christ is the head, with the noble brotherhood of apostles and martyrs, of the just made perfect, and, I will add, of angels; and, speaking with a faith becoming this sublime association, he will not speak in vain. To this faith, to prophetic hope, to a devout trust in the glorious issues of Christianity, we dedicate these walls; and may God here train up teachers, worthy to mingle and bear a part, with the holy of both worlds, in the cause of man's redemption.

5. Again, that the ministry may be imbued with new power, it needs a spirit of enterprise and reform. They who enter it should feel that it may be improved. We live in a stirring, advancing age; and shall not the noblest function on earth partake of the general progress? Why is the future ministry to be a servile continuation of the past? Have all the methods of operating on human beings been tried and exhausted? Are there no unessayed passages to the human heart? If we live in a new era, must not religion be exhibited under new aspects, or in new relations? Is not skepticism taking a new form? Has not Christianity new foes to contend with? And are there no new weapons and modes of warfare, by which its triumphs are to be insured? If human nature is manifesting itself in new lights, and passing through a new and most interesting stage of its progress, shall it be described by the commonplaces, and appealed to exclusively by the motives, which belonged to earlier periods of society? May not the mind have become susceptible of nobler incitements than those which suited ruder times? Shall the minister linger behind his age, and be dragged along, as he often has been, in the last ranks of improvement? Let those who are

to assume the ministry be taught, that they have something more to do than to handle old topics in old ways, and to walk in beaten and long-worn paths. Let them inquire, if new powers and agents may not be brought to bear on the human character. Is it incredible, that the progress of intellect and knowledge should develope new resources for the teacher of religion, as well as for the statesman, the artist, the philosopher? Are there no new combinations and new uses of the elements of thought, as well as of the elements of nature? Is it impossible that in the vast compass of Scripture, of nature, of Providence, and of the soul, there should be undisclosed or dimly defined truths, which may give a new impulse to the human mind? We dedicate this place, not only to the continuance, but to the improvement of the ministry; and let this improvement begin, at once, in those particulars, where the public, if not the clergy, feel it to be wanted. Let those, who are to be educated here, be admonished against the frigid eloquence, the school-boy tone, the inanimate diction, too common in the pulpit, and which would be endured nowhere else. Let them speak in tones of truth and nature, and adopt the style and elocution of men, who have an urgent work in hand, and who are thirsting for the regeneration of individuals and society.

6. Another source of power, too obvious to need elucidation, yet too important to be omitted, is, an independent spirit. By which I mean, not an unfeeling defiance of the opinions and usages of society, but that moral courage, which, through good report and evil report, reverently hears, and fearlessly obeys, the voice of conscience and God. He who would instruct men, must not fear them. He who is to reform society, must

not be anxious to keep its level. Dread of opinion effeminates preaching, and takes from truth its pungency. The minister so subdued, may flourish his weapons in the air, to the admiration of spectators, but will never pierce the conscience. The minister, like the good knight, should be without fear. Let him cultivate that boldness of speech, for which Paul prayed. Let him not flatter great or small. Let him not wrap up reproof in a decorated verbiage. Let him make no compromise with evil because followed by a multitude, but, for this very cause, lift up against it a more earnest voice. Let him beware of the shackles which society insensibly fastens on the mind and the tongue. Moral courage is not the virtue of our times. The love of popularity is the all-tainting vice of a republic. Besides, the increasing connexion between a minister and the community, whilst it liberalizes the mind, and counteracts professional prejudices, has a tendency to enslave him to opinion, to wear away the energy of virtuous resolution, and to change him from an intrepid guardian of virtue and foe of sin, into a merely elegant and amiable companion. Against this dishonorable cowardice, which smoothes the thoughts and style of the teacher, until they glide through the ear and the mind without giving a shock to the most delicate nerves, let the young man be guarded. We dedicate this institution to Christian independence. May it send forth brave spirits to the vindication of truth and religion.

7. I shall now close, with naming the chief source of power to the minister; one, indeed, which has been in a measure anticipated, and all along implied, but which ought not to be dismissed without a more distinct annunciation. I refer to that spirit, or frame, or

sentiment, in which the love of God, the love of men, the love of duty, meet as their highest result, and in which they are perfected and most gloriously displayed; I mean the spirit of self-sacrifice, — the spirit of martyrdom. This was the perfection of Christ, and it is the noblest inspiration which his followers derive from him. Say not that this is a height to which the generality of ministers must not be expected to rise. This spirit is of more universal obligation than many imagine. It enters into all the virtues which deeply interest us. In truth, there is no thorough virtue without it. Who is the upright man? He, who would rather die than defraud. Who the good parent? He, to whom his children are dearer than life. Who the good patriot? He, who counts not life dear in his country's cause. Who the philanthropist? He, who forgets himself in an absorbing zeal for the mitigation of human suffering, for the freedom, virtue, and illumination of men. It is not Christianity alone which has taught self-sacrifice. Conscience and the divinity within us, have in all ages borne testimony to its loveliness and grandeur, and history borrows from it her chief splendors. But Christ on his cross has taught it with a perfection unknown before, and his glory consists in the power with which he breathes it. Into this spirit, Christ's meanest disciple is expected to drink. How much more the teachers and guides of his church! He who is not moved with this sublime feature of our religion, who cannot rise above himself, who cannot, by his own consciousness, comprehend the kindling energy and solemn joy, which pain or peril in a noble cause has often inspired, — he, to whom this language is a mystery, wants one great mark of his vocation to the sacred office. Let him

enlist under any standard rather than the cross. To preach with power, a man must feel Christianity to be worthy of the blood which it has cost; and, espousing it as the chief hope of the human race, must contemn life's ordinary interests, compared with the glory and happiness of advancing it. This spirit of self-exposure and self-surrender, throws into preachers an energy which no other principle can give. In truth, such power resides in disinterestedness, that no man can understand his full capacity of thought and feeling, his strength to do and suffer, until he gives himself, with a single heart, to a great and holy cause. New faculties seem to be created, and more than human might sometimes imparted, by a pure fervent love. Most of us are probably strangers to the resources of power in our own breasts, through the weight and pressure of the chains of selfishness. We consecrate this institution, then, to that spirit of martyrdom, of disinterested attachment to the Christian cause, through which it first triumphed, and for want of which its triumphs are now slow. In an age of luxury and self-indulgence, we would devote these walls to the training of warm, manly, generous spirits. May they never shelter the self-seeking slaves of ease and comfort, pupils of Epicurus rather than of Christ. God send from this place devoted and efficient friends of Christianity and the human race.

My friends, I have insisted on the need, and illustrated the sources, of power in the ministry. To this end, may the institution, in whose behalf we are now met together, be steadily and sacredly devoted. I would say to its guardians and teachers, Let this be your chief aim. I would say to the students, Keep this in sight in all your studies. Never forget your

great vocation; that you are to prepare yourselves for a strong, deep, and beneficent agency on the minds of your fellow-beings. Everywhere I see a demand for the power on which I have now insisted. The cry comes to me from society and from the church. The condition of society needs a more efficient administration of Christianity. Great and radical changes are needed in the community to make it Christian. There are those indeed, who, mistaking the courtesies and refinements of civilized life for virtue, see no necessity of a great revolution in the world. But civilization, in hiding the grossness, does not break the power of evil propensities. Let us not deceive ourselves. Multitudes are living with few thoughts of God, and of the true purpose and glory of their being. Among the nominal believers in a Deity and in a judgment to come, sensuality, and ambition, and the love of the world, sit on their thrones, and laugh to scorn the impotence of preaching. Christianity has yet a hard war to wage, and many battles to win; and it needs intrepid, powerful ministers, who will find courage and excitement, not dismay, in the strength and number of their foes.

Christians, you have seen in this discourse, the purposes and claims of this theological institution. Offer your fervent prayers for its prosperity. Besiege the throne of mercy in its behalf. Cherish it as the dearest hope of our churches. Enlarge its means of usefulness, and let your voice penetrate its walls, calling aloud and importunately for enlightened and powerful teachers. Thus joining in effort with the directors and instructors of this seminary, doubt not that God will here train up ministers worthy to bear his truth to present and future generations. If on the contrary you

and they slumber, you will have erected these walls, not to nourish energy, but to be its tomb, not to bear witness to your zeal, but to be a melancholy monument of fainting effort and betrayed truth.

But let me not cast a cloud over the prospects of this day. In hope I began, — with hope I will end. This institution has noble distinctions, and has afforded animating pledges. It is eminently a free institution, an asylum from the spiritual despotism, which, in one shape or another, overspreads the greatest part of Christendom. It has already given to the churches a body of teachers, who, in theological acquisitions and ministerial gifts, need not shrink from comparison with their predecessors or contemporaries. I see in it means and provisions, nowhere surpassed, for training up enlightened, free, magnanimous, self-sacrificing friends of truth. In this hope, let us then proceed to the work, which has brought us together. With trust in God, with love to mankind, with unaffected attachment to Christian truth, with earnest wishes for its propagation through all lands and its transmission to remotest ages, let us now, with one heart and one voice, dedicate this edifice to the One living and true God, to Christ and his Church, to the instruction and regeneration of the human soul.

THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN.

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED

TO THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY IN FEDERAL-STREET,

BOSTON.

EPHESIANS vi. 1, 2: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise."

FROM these words I propose to point out the duties of children to their parents. My young friends, let me ask your serious attention. I wish to explain to you the honor and obedience which you are required to render your parents; and to impress you with the importance, excellence, and happiness of this temper and conduct.

It will be observed, in the progress of this discourse, that I have chiefly in view the youngest part of my hearers; but I would not on this account be supposed to intimate, that those who have reached more advanced periods of life, are exempted from the obligation of honoring their parents. However old we may be, we should never forget that tenderness which watched over our infancy, which listened to our cries before we could

articulate our wants, and was never weary with minis tering to our comfort and enjoyments. There is scarcely any thing more interesting than to see the *man* retaining the respect and gratitude which belong to the *child*; than to see persons, who have come forward into life, remembering with affection the guides and friends of their youth, and laboring by their kind and respectful attention to cheer the declining years, and support the trembling infirmities, of those whose best days were spent in solicitude and exertion for their happiness and improvement. He who suffers any objects or pursuits to shut out a parent from his heart, who becomes so weaned from the breast which nourished and the arms which cherished him, as coldly to forsake a parent's dwelling, and neglect a parent's comfort, not only renounces the dictates of religion and morality, but deserves to be cast out from society as a stranger to the common sensibilities of human nature.

In the observations I am now to make, all who have parents should feel an interest; for some remarks will apply to all. But I shall principally confine myself to those, who are so young as to depend on the care and to live under the eye of their parents; who surround a parent's table, dwell beneath a parent's roof, and hear continually a parent's voice. To such the text addresses itself, "Honor and obey your father and mother."

I shall not attempt to explain and enforce what is here required of you.

First, you are required to view and treat your parents with *respect*. Your tender, inexperienced age requires that you think of yourselves with humility, and conduct yourselves with modesty; that you respect the superior age and wisdom and improvements of your parents,

and observe towards them a submissive deportment. Nothing is more unbecoming in you, nothing will render you more unpleasant in the eyes of others, than froward or contemptuous conduct towards your parents. There are children, and I wish I could say there are only a few, who speak to their parents with rudeness, grow sullen at their rebukes, behave in their presence as if they deserved no attention, hear them speak without noticing them, and rather ridicule than honor them. There are many children at the present day, who think more highly of themselves than of their elders; who think that their own wishes are first to be gratified; who abuse the condescension and kindness of their parents, and treat them as servants rather than superiors.

Beware, my young friends, lest you grow up with this assuming and selfish spirit. Regard your parents as kindly given you by God, to support, direct, and govern you in your present state of weakness and inexperience. Express your respect for them in your manner and conversation. Do not neglect those outward signs of dependence and inferiority which suit your age. You are young, and you should therefore take the lowest place, and rather retire than thrust yourselves forward into notice. You have much to learn, and you should therefore hear instead of seeking to be heard. You are dependent, and you should therefore *ask* instead of *demanding* what you desire; and you should receive every thing from your parents as a favor, and not as a debt. I do not mean to urge upon you a slavish fear of your parents. Love them, and love them ardently; but mingle a sense of their superiority with your love. Feel a confidence in their kindness; but let not this confidence make you rude

and presumptuous, and lead to indecent familiarity. Talk to them with openness and freedom; but never contradict with violence; never answer with passion or contempt.

The Scriptures say, "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother." "The eye that mocketh at his father, the ravens of the valley shall pluck it out, and the young ravens shall eat it." The sacred history teaches us, that when Solomon, on his throne, saw his mother approaching him, he rose to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and caused a seat to be set for her on his right hand. Let this wise and great king teach you to respect your parents.

Secondly, You should be grateful to your parents. Consider how much you owe them. The time has been, and it was not a long time past, when you depended wholly on their kindness, when you had no strength to make a single effort for yourselves, when you could neither speak, nor walk, and knew not the use of any of your powers. Had not a parent's arm supported you, you must have fallen to the earth and perished. Observe with attention the infants which you so often see, and consider that a little while ago you were as feeble as they are; you were only a burden and a care, and you had nothing with which you could repay your parents' affection. But did they forsake you? How many sleepless nights have they been disturbed by your cries! When you were sick, how tenderly did they hang over you! With what pleasure have they seen you grow up in health to your present state! and what do you now possess, which you have not received from their hands? God indeed is your great parent, your best friend, and from him every good

gift descends; but God is pleased to bestow every thing upon you through the kindness of your parents. To your parents you owe every comfort; you owe to them the shelter you enjoy from the rain and cold, the raiment which covers and the food which nourishes you. While you are seeking amusement, or are employed in gaining knowledge at school, your parents are toiling that you may be happy, that your wants be supplied, that your minds may be improved, that you may grow up and be useful in the world. And when you consider how often you have forfeited all this kindness, and yet how ready they have been to forgive you, and to continue their favors, ought you not to look upon them with the tenderest gratitude? What greater monster can there be than an unthankful child, whose heart is never warmed and melted by the daily expressions of parental solicitude; who, instead of requiting his best friend by his affectionate conduct, is sullen and passionate, and thinks that his parents have done nothing for him, because they will not do all he desires? My young friends, your parents' hearts have ached enough for you already; you should strive from this time, by your expressions of gratitude and love, to requite their goodness. Do you ask how you may best express these feelings of respect and gratitude, which have been enjoined? In answer, I would observe,

Thirdly, That you must make it your study to obey your parents, to do what they command, and do it cheerfully. Your own hearts will tell you that this is a most natural and proper expression of honor and love. For how often do we see children opposing their wills to the will of their parents; refusing to comply with absolute commands; growing more obstinate, the more they

are required to do what they dislike; and at last sullenly and unwillingly obeying, because they can no longer refuse without exposing themselves to punishment. Consider, my young friends, that by such conduct you very much displease God, who has given you parents, that they may control your passions and train you up in the way you should go. Consider how much better they can decide for you, than you can for yourselves. You know but little of the world in which you live. You hastily catch at every thing which promises you pleasure; and unless the authority of a parent should restrain you, you would soon rush into ruin, without a thought or a fear. In pursuing your own inclinations, your health would be destroyed, your minds would run waste, you would grow up slothful, selfish, a trouble to others, and burdensome to yourselves. Submit, then, cheerfully to your parents. Have you not experienced their goodness long enough to know that they wish to make you happy, even when their commands are most severe? Prove, then, your sense of their goodness by doing cheerfully what they require. When they oppose your wishes, do not think that you have more knowledge than they. Do not receive their commands with a sour, angry, sullen look, which says louder than words, that you obey only because you dare not rebel. If they deny your requests, do not persist in urging them; but consider how many requests they have already granted you. Consider that you have no claim upon them, and that it will be base and ungrateful for you, after all their tenderness, to murmur and complain. Do not expect that your parents are to give up every thing to your wishes; but study to give up every thing to theirs. Do not wait for them to threaten; but, when a look tells

you what they want, fly to perform it. This is the way in which you can best reward them for all their pains and labors. In this way you will make their houses pleasant and cheerful. But if you are disobedient, preverse, and stubborn, you will be uneasy yourselves, and will make all around you unhappy. You will make home a place of contention, noise, and anger; and your best friends will have reason to wish that you had never been born. A disobedient child almost always grows up ill-natured and disobliging to all with whom he is connected. None love him, and he has no heart to love any but himself. If you would be amiable in your temper and manner, and desire to be beloved, let me advise you to begin life with giving up your wills to your parents.

Fourthly, You must further express your respect, affection, and gratitude, by doing all in your power to assist and oblige your parents. Children can very soon make some return for the kindness they receive. Every day you can render your parents some little service, and often save them many cares, and sometimes not a little expense. There have been children, who in early life have been great supports to their sick, poor, and helpless parents. This is the most honorable way in which you can be employed. You must never think too highly of yourselves to be unwilling to do any thing for those who have done so much for you. You should never let your amusements take such a hold of your minds, as to make you slothful, backward, and unwilling, when you are called to serve your parents. Some children seem to think that they have nothing to seek but their own pleasure. They will run from every task which is imposed on them; and leave their parents

to want many comforts, rather than expose themselves to a little trouble. But consider, had they loved you no better than you loved them, how wretched would have been your state! There are some children, who not only refuse to exert themselves for their parents, but add very much to their cares, give them unnecessary trouble, and, by carelessness, by wasting, by extravagance, help to keep them in poverty and toil. Such children, as they grow up, instead of seeking to provide for themselves, generally grow more and more burdensome to their friends, and lead useless, sluggish, and often profligate lives. My young friends, you should be ashamed, after having given your parents so much pain, to multiply their cares and labors unnecessarily. You should learn very early, to be active in pleasing them, and active in doing what you can for yourselves. Do not waste all your spirit upon play; but learn to be useful. Perhaps the time is coming, when your parents will need as much attention from you as you have received from them; and you should endeavour to form such industrious, obliging habits, that you may render their last years as happy as they have rendered the first years of your existence.

Fifthly, You should express your respect for your parents, and your sense of their kindness and superior wisdom, by placing unreserved confidence in them. This is a very important part of your duty. Children should learn to be honest, sincere, and open-hearted to their parents. An artful, hypocritical child is one of the most unpromising characters in the world. You should have no secrets which you are unwilling to disclose to your parents. If you have done wrong, you should openly confess it, and ask that forgiveness which

a parent's heart is ready to bestow. If you wish to undertake any thing, ask their consent. Never begin any thing in the hope that you can conceal your design. If you once strive to impose on your parents, you will be led on, from one step to another, to invent falsehoods, to practise artifice, till you will become contemptible and hateful. You will soon be detected, and then none will trust you. Sincerity in a child will make up for many faults. Of children, he is the worst, who watches the eyes of his parents, pretends to obey as long as they see him, but as soon as they have turned away, does what they have forbidden. Whatever else you do, never deceive. Let your parents always learn your faults from your own lips; and be assured they will never love you the less for your openness and sincerity.

Lastly, You must prove your respect and gratitude to your parents by attending seriously to their instructions and admonitions, and by improving the advantages they afford you for becoming wise, useful, good, and happy for ever. I hope, my young friends, that you have parents who take care, not only of your bodies, but your souls; who instruct you in your duty, who talk to you of your God and Saviour, who teach you to pray and to read the Scriptures, and who strive to give you such knowledge, and bring you up in such habits, as will lead you to usefulness on earth, and to happiness in heaven. If you have not, I can only pity you; I have little hope that I can do you good by what I have here said. But if your parents are faithful in instructing and guiding you, you must prove your gratitude to them and to God, by listening respectfully and attentively to what they say; by shunning the temptations of which

they warn you, and by walking in the paths they mark out before you. You must labor to answer their hopes and wishes, by improving in knowledge; by being industrious at school; by living peaceably with your companions; by avoiding all profane and wicked language; by fleeing bad company; by treating all persons with respect; by being kind and generous and honest, and by loving and serving your Father in heaven. This is the happiest and most delightful way of repaying the kindness of your parents. Let them see you growing up with amiable tempers and industrious habits; let them see you delighting to do good, and fearing to offend God; and they will think you have never been a burden. Their fears and anxieties about you, will give place to brighter views. They will hope to see you prosperous, respected, and beloved in the present world. But if in this they are to be disappointed, if they are soon to see you stretched on the bed of sickness and death, they will still smile amidst their tears, and be comforted by the thought that you are the children of God, and that you are going to a Father that loves you better than they. If, on the contrary, you slight and despise their instructions, and suffer your youth to run waste, you will do much to embitter their happiness and shorten their days. Many parents have gone to the grave broken-hearted by the ingratitude, perverseness, impiety, and licentiousness of their children. My young friends, listen seriously to parental admonition. Beware, lest you pierce with anguish that breast on which you have so often leaned. Beware, lest by early contempt of instruction, you bring yourselves to shame and misery in this world, and draw on your heads still heavier ruin in the world beyond the grave.

Children, I have now set before you your duties. Let me once more beseech you to honor your father and mother. Ever cling to them with confidence and love. Be to them an honor, an ornament, a solace, and a support. Be more than they expect, and if possible be all that they desire. To you they are now looking with an affection which trembles for your safety. So live, that their eyes may ever fix on you with beams of hope and joy. So live, that the recollection of you may soothe their last hours. May you now walk by their side in the steps of the holy Saviour, and through his grace may you meet again in a better and happier world. Amen.

HONOR DUE TO ALL MEN.

1 Peter ii. 17: "Honor all men."

Among the many and inestimable blessings of Christianity, I regard, as not the least, the new sentiment with which it teaches man to look upon his fellow-beings; the new interest which it awakens in us towards every thing human; the new importance which it gives to the soul; the new relation which it establishes between man and man. In this respect, it began a mighty revolution, which has been silently spreading itself through society, and which, I believe, is not to stop, until new ties shall have taken place of those which have hitherto, in the main, connected the human race. Christianity has as yet but begun its work of reformation. Under its influences, a new order of society is advancing, surely though slowly; and this beneficent change it is to accomplish in no small measure by revealing to men their own nature, and teaching them to "honor all" who partake it.

As yet Christianity has done little, compared with what it is to do, in establishing the true bond of union between man and man. The old bonds of society still continue in a great degree. They are instinct, interest,

force. The true tie, which is mutual respect, calling forth mutual, growing, never-failing acts of love, is as yet little known. A new revelation, if I may so speak, remains to be made; or rather, the truths of the old revelation in regard to the greatness of human nature, are to be brought out from obscurity and neglect. The soul is to be regarded with a religious reverence, hitherto unfelt; and the solemn claims of every being to whom this divine principle is imparted, are to be established on the ruins of those pernicious principles, both in church and state, which have so long divided mankind into the classes of the abject Many and the self-exalting Few.

There is nothing of which men know so little, as themselves. They understand incomparably more of the surrounding creation, of matter, and of its laws, than of that spiritual principle, to which matter was made to be the minister, and without which the outward universe would be worthless. Of course, no man can be wholly a stranger to the soul, for the soul is himself, and he cannot but be conscious of its most obvious workings. But it is to most a chaos, a region shrouded in ever-shifting mists, baffling the eye and bewildering the imagination. The affinity of the mind with God, its moral power, the purposes for which its faculties were bestowed, its connexion with futurity, and the dependence of its whole happiness on its own right action and progress, — these truths, though they might be expected to absorb us, are to most men little more than sounds, and to none of us those living realities, which, I trust, they are to become. That conviction, without which we are all poor, of the unlimited and immortal nature of the soul, remains in a great

degree to be developed. Men have as yet no just respect for themselves, and of consequence no just respect for others. The true bond of society is thus wanting; and accordingly there is a great deficiency of Christian benevolence. There is indeed much instinctive, native benevolence, and this is not to be despised; but the benevolence of Jesus Christ, which consists in a calm purpose to suffer, and, if need be, to die, for our fellow-creatures, the benevolence of Christ on the cross, which is the true pattern to the Christian, this is little known; and what is the cause? It is this. We see nothing in human beings to entitle them to such sacrifices; we do not think them worth suffering for. Why should we be martyrs for beings, who awaken in us little more of moral interest than the brutes?

I hold, that nothing is to make man a true lover of man, but the discovery of something interesting and great in human nature. We must see and feel, that a human being is something important and of immeasurable importance. We must see and feel the broad distance between the spiritual life within us, and the vegetable or animal life which acts around us. I cannot love the flower, however beautiful, with a disinterested affection, which will make me sacrifice to it my own prosperity. You will in vain exhort me to attach myself, with my whole strength of affection, to the inferior animals, however useful or attractive; and why not? They want the capacity of truth, virtue, and progress. They want that principle of duty, which alone gives permanence to a being; and accordingly they soon lose their individual nature, and go to mingle with the general mass. A human being deserves a different affection from what we bestow on inferior creatures, for he

has a rational and moral nature, by which he is to endure for ever, by which he may achieve an unutterable happiness, or sink into an unutterable woe. He is more interesting through what is in him, than the earth or heavens; and the only way to love him aright, is to catch some glimpse of this immortal power within him. Until this is done, all charity is little more than instinct; we shall embrace the great interests of human nature with coldness.

It may be said, that Christianity has done much to awaken benevolence, and that it has taught men to call one another brethren. Yes, to *call* one another so; but has it as yet given the true feeling of brotherhood? We undoubtedly feel ourselves to be all of one race, and this is well. We trace ourselves up to one pair, and feel the same blood flowing in our veins. But do we understand our spiritual Brotherhood? Do we feel ourselves to be derived from one Heavenly Parent, in whose image we are all made, and whose perfection we may constantly approach? Do we feel that there is one divine life in our own and in all souls? This seems to me the only true bond of man to man. Here is a tie more sacred, more enduring, than all the ties of this earth. Is it felt, and do we in consequence truly honor one another?

Sometimes, indeed, we see men giving sincere, profound, and almost unmeasured respect to their fellow-creatures; but to whom? To great men; to men distinguished by a broad line from the multitude; to men preëminent by genius, force of character, daring effort, high station, brilliant success. To such, honor is given; but this is not to "honor all men"; and the homage paid to such, is generally unfriendly to that Christian

estimate of human beings for which I am now pleading. The great are honored at the expense of their race. They absorb and concentrate the world's admiration, and their less gifted fellow-beings are thrown by their brightness into a deeper shade, and passed over with a colder contempt. Now I have no desire to derogate from the honor paid to great men, but I say, Let them not rise by the depression of the multitude. I say, that great men, justly regarded, exalt our estimate of the human race, and bind us to the multitude of men more closely; and when they are not so regarded, when they are converted into idols, when they serve to wean our interest from ordinary men, they corrupt us, they sever the sacred bond of humanity which should attach us to all, and our characters become vitiated by our very admiration of greatness. The true view of great men is, that they are only examples and manifestations of our common nature, showing what belongs to all souls, though unfolded as yet only in a few. The light which shines from them is, after all, but a faint revelation of the power which is treasured up in every human being. They are not prodigies, not miracles, but natural developements of the human soul. They are indeed as men among children, but the children have a principle of growth which leads to manhood.

That great men and the multitude of minds are of one family, is apparent, I think, in the admiration which the great inspire into the multitude. A sincere, enlightened admiration always springs from something congenial in him who feels it with him who inspires it. He that can understand and delight in greatness, was created to partake of it; the germ is in him; and sometimes this admiration, in what we deem inferior minds,

discovers a nobler spirit than belongs to the great man who awakens it; for sometimes the great man is so absorbed in his own greatness as to admire no other; and I should not hesitate to say, that a common mind, which is yet capable of a generous admiration, is destined to rise higher than the man of eminent capacities, who can enjoy no power or excellence but his own. When I hear of great men, I wish not to separate them from their race, but to blend them with it. I esteem no small benefit of the philosophy of mind, that it teaches us that the elements of the greatest thoughts of the man of genius, exist in his humbler brethren, and that the faculties which the scientific exert in the profoundest discoveries, are precisely the same with those which common men employ in the daily labors of life.

To show the grounds on which the obligation to honor all men rests, I might take a minute survey of that human nature which is common to all, and set forth its claims to reverence. But, leaving this wide range, I observe that there is one principle of the soul, which makes all men essentially equal, which places all on a level as to means of happiness, which may place in the first rank of human beings those who are the most depressed in worldly condition, and which therefore gives the most depressed a title to interest and respect. I refer to the Sense of Duty, to the power of discerning and doing right, to the moral and religious principle, to the inward monitor which speaks in the name of God, to the capacity of virtue or excellence. This is the great gift of God. We can conceive no greater. In seraph and archangel, we can

conceive no higher energy than the power of virtue, or the power of forming themselves after the will and moral perfections of God. This power breaks down all barriers between the seraph and the lowest human being; it makes them brethren. Whoever has derived from God this perception and capacity of rectitude, has a bond of union with the spiritual world, stronger than all the ties of nature. He possesses a principle which, if he is faithful to it, must carry him forward for ever, and insures to him the improvement and happiness of the highest order of beings.

It is this moral power, which makes all men essentially equal, which annihilates all the distinctions of this world. Through this, the ignorant and the poor may become the greatest of the race; for the greatest is he who is most true to the principle of duty. It is not improbable, that the noblest human beings are to be found in the least favored conditions of society, among those, whose names are never uttered beyond the narrow circle in which they toil and suffer, who have but "two mites" to give away, who have perhaps not even that, but who "desire to be fed with the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table;" for in this class may be found those, who have withstood the severest temptation, who have practised the most arduous duties, who have confided in God under the heaviest trials, who have been most wronged and have forgiven most; and these are the great, the exalted. It matters nothing, what the particular duties are to which the individual is called, — how minute or obscure in their outward form. Greatness in God's sight lies, not in the extent of the sphere which is filled, or of the effect which is produced, but altogether in the power of virtue in the soul, in the en-

ergy with which God's will is chosen, with which trial is borne, and goodness loved and pursued.

The sense of duty is the greatest gift of God. The Idea of Right is the primary and the highest revelation of God to the human mind, and all outward revelations are founded on and addressed to it. All mysteries of science and theology fade away before the grandeur of the simple perception of duty, which dawns on the mind of the little child. That perception brings him into the moral kingdom of God. That lays on him an everlasting bond. He, in whom the conviction of duty is unfolded, becomes subject from that moment to a law, which no power in the universe can abrogate. He forms a new and indissoluble connexion with God, that of an accountable being. He begins to stand before an inward tribunal, on the decisions of which his whole happiness rests; he hears a voice, which, if faithfully followed, will guide him to perfection, and in neglecting which he brings upon himself inevitable misery. We little understand the solemnity of the moral principle in every human mind. We think not how awful are its functions. We forget that it is the germ of immortality. Did we understand it, we should look with a feeling of reverence on every being to whom it is given.

Having shown in the preceding remarks, that there is a foundation in the human soul for the honor enjoined in our text towards all men, I proceed to observe, that, if we look next into Christianity, we shall find this duty enforced by new and still more solemn considerations. This whole religion is a testimony to the worth of man in the sight of God, to the importance of human nature, to the infinite purposes for which we were framed. God is there set forth, as sending to the succour of his human

family, his Beloved Son, the bright image and representative of his own perfections; and sending him, not simply to roll away a burden of pain and punishment (for this, however magnified in systems of theology, is not his highest work), but to create men after that divine image which he himself bears, to purify the soul from every stain, to communicate to it new power over evil, and to open before it Immortality as its aim and destination, — Immortality, by which we are to understand, not merely a perpetual, but an ever-improving and celestial being. Such are the views of Christianity. And these blessings it proffers, not to a few, not to the educated, not to the eminent, but to all human beings, to the poorest, and the most fallen; and we know, that, through the power of its promises, it has in not a few instances raised the most fallen to true greatness, and given them in their present virtue and peace, an earnest of the Heaven which it unfolds. Such is Christianity. Men, viewed in the light of this religion, are beings cared for by God, to whom he has given his Son, on whom he pours forth his Spirit, and whom he has created for the highest good in the universe, for participation in his own perfections and happiness. My friends, such is Christianity. Our skepticism as to our own nature cannot quench the bright light which that religion sheds on the soul and on the prospects of mankind; and just as far as we receive its truth, we shall honor all men.

I know I shall be told that Christianity speaks of man as a sinner, and thus points him out to abhorrence and scorn. I know it speaks of human sin, but it does not speak of this as indissolubly bound up with the soul, as entering into the essence of human nature, but as a temporary stain, which it calls on us to wash away. Its

greatest doctrine is, that the most lost are recoverable, that the most fallen may rise, and that there is no height of purity, power, felicity in the universe, to which the guiltiest mind may not, through penitence, attain. Christianity indeed gives us a deeper, keener feeling of the guilt of mankind, than any other religion. By the revelation of perfection in the character of Jesus Christ, it shows us how imperfect even the best men are. But it reveals perfection in Jesus, not for our discouragement, but as our model, reveals it only that we may thirst for and approach it. From Jesus I learn what man is to become, that is, if true to this new light; and true he may be.

Christianity, I have said, shows man as a sinner, but I nowhere meet in it those dark views of our race which would make us shrink from it as from a nest of venomous reptiles. According to the courteous style of theology, man has been called half brute and half devil. But this is a perverse and pernicious exaggeration. The brute, as it is called, that is, animal, appetite is indeed strong in human beings; but is there nothing within us but appetite? Is there nothing to war with it? Does this constitute the essence of the soul? Is it not rather an accident, the result of the mind's union with matter? Is not its spring in the body, and may it not be expected to perish with the body? In addition to animal propensities, I see the tendency to criminal excess in all men's passions. I see not one only, but many Tempters in every human heart. Nor am I insensible to the fearful power of these enemies to our virtue. But is there nothing in man but temptation, but propensity to sin? Are there no counterworking powers? no attractions in virtue? no tendencies to God?

no sympathies with sorrow? no reverence for greatness? no moral conflicts? no triumphs of principle? This very strength of temptation seems to me to be one of the indications of man's greatness. It shows a being framed to make progress through difficulty, suffering, and conflict; that is, it shows a being designed for the highest order of virtues; for we all feel by an unerring instinct, that virtue is elevated in proportion to the obstacles which it surmounts, to the power with which it is chosen and held fast. I see men placed by their Creator on a field of battle; but compassed with peril that they may triumph over it; and, though often overborne, still summoned to new efforts, still privileged to approach the Source of all power, and to seek "grace in time of need," and still addressed in tones of encouragement by a celestial Leader, who has himself fought and conquered, and holds forth to them his own crown of righteousness and victory.

From these brief views of human nature and of Christianity, you will see the grounds of the solemn obligation of honoring all men, of attaching infinite importance to human nature, and of respecting it, even in its present infant, feeble, tottering state. This sentiment of honor or respect for human beings, strikes me more and more as essential to the Christian character. I conceive that a more thorough understanding and a more faithful culture of this, would do very much to carry forward the church and the world. In truth, I attach to this sentiment such importance, that I measure by its progress the progress of society. I judge of public events very much by their bearing on this. I estimate political revolutions, chiefly by their tendency to exalt men's conceptions of their nature, and to inspire them

with respect for one another's claims. The present stupendous movements in Europe naturally suggest, and almost force upon me, this illustration of the importance which I have given to the sentiment enjoined in our text. Allow me to detain you a few moments on this topic.

What is it, then, I ask, which makes the present revolutionary movement abroad so interesting? I answer, that I see in it the principle of respect for human nature and for the human race, developing itself more powerfully, and this to me constitutes its chief interest. I see in it proofs, indications, that the mind is awakening to a consciousness of what it is, and of what it is made for. In this movement I see man becoming to himself a higher object. I see him attaining to the conviction of the equal and indestructible rights of every human being. I see the dawning of that great principle, that the individual is not made to be the instrument of others, but to govern himself by an inward law, and to advance towards his proper perfection; that he belongs to himself and to God, and to no human superior. I know, indeed, that, in the present state of the world, these conceptions are exceedingly unsettled and obscure; and in truth, little effort has hitherto been made to place them in a clear light, and to give them a definite and practical form in men's minds. The multitude know not with any distinctness what they want. Imagination, unschooled by reason and experience, dazzles them with bright but baseless visions. They are driven onward with a perilous violence, by a vague consciousness of not having found their element; by a vague yet noble faith in a higher good than they have attained; by impatience under restraints, which they feel to be degrading. In

this violence, however, there is nothing strange, nor ought it to discourage us. It is, I believe, universally true, that great principles, in their first developement, manifest themselves irregularly. It is so in religion. In history we often see religion, especially after long depression, breaking out in vehemence and enthusiasm, sometimes stirring up bloody conflicts, and through struggles establishing a calmer empire over society. In like manner, political history shows us, that men's consciousness of their rights and essential equality has at first developed itself passionately. Still the consciousness is a noble one, and the presage of a better social state.

Am I asked, what I hope from the present revolutionary movements in Europe? I answer, that I hope a good which includes all others, and which almost hides all others from my view. I hope the subversion of institutions, by which the true bond between man and man has been more or less dissolved, by which the will of one or a few has broken down the will, the heart, the conscience of the many; and I hope that, in the place of these, are to grow up institutions, which will express, cherish, and spread far and wide a just respect for human nature, which will strengthen in men a consciousness of their powers, duties, and rights, which will train the individual to moral and religious independence, which will propose as their end the elevation of all orders of the community, and which will give full scope to the best minds in this work of general improvement. I do not say, that I expect it to be suddenly realized. The sun, which is to bring on a brighter day, is rising in thick and threatening clouds. Perhaps the minds of men were never more unquiet than at the present moment.

Still I do not despair. That a higher order of ideas or principles is beginning to be unfolded; that a wider philanthropy is beginning to triumph over the distinctions of ranks and nations; that a new feeling of what is due to the ignorant, poor, and depraved, has sprung up; that the right of every human being to such an education as shall call forth his best faculties, and train him more and more to control himself, is recognised as it never was before; and that government is more and more regarded as intended not to elevate the few, but to guard the rights of all; that these great revolutions in principle have commenced and are spreading, who can deny? and to me they are prophetic of an improved condition of human nature and human affairs. — O, that this melioration might be accomplished without blood! As a Christian, I feel a misgiving, when I rejoice in any good, however great, for which this fearful price has been paid. In truth, a good so won is necessarily imperfect and generally transient. War may subvert a despotism, but seldom builds up better institutions. Even when joined, as in our own history, with high principles, it inflames and leaves behind it passions, which make liberty a feverish conflict of jealous parties, and which expose a people to the tyranny of faction under the forms of freedom. Few things impair men's reverence for human nature, more than war; and did I not see other and holier influences than the sword, working out the regeneration of the race, I should indeed despair.

In this discourse I have spoken of the grounds and importance of that honor or respect which is due from us, and enjoined on us, towards all human beings. The various forms, in which this principle is to be exercised or manifested, I want time to enlarge on. I would only

say, "Honor all men." Honor man, from the beginning to the end of his earthly course. Honor the child. Welcome into being the infant, with a feeling of its mysterious grandeur, with the feeling, that an immortal existence has begun, that a spirit has been kindled which is never to be quenched. Honor the child. On this principle, all good education rests. Never shall we learn to train up the child, till we take it in our arms, as Jesus did, and feel distinctly that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." In that short sentence is taught the spirit of the true system of education; and for want of understanding it, little effectual aid, I fear, is yet given to the heavenly principle in the infant soul. — Again. Honor the poor. This sentiment of respect is essential to improving the connexion between the more and less prosperous conditions of society. This alone makes beneficence truly godlike. Without it, almsgiving degrades the receiver. We must learn how slight and shadowy are the distinctions between us and the poor; and that the last in outward condition may be first in the best attributes of humanity. A fraternal union, founded on this deep conviction, and intended to lift up and strengthen the exposed and tempted poor, is to do infinitely more for that suffering class, than all our artificial associations; and till Christianity shall have breathed into us this spirit of respect for our nature, wherever it is found, we shall do them little good. I conceive, that in the present low state of Christian virtue, we little apprehend the power which might be exerted over the fallen and destitute, by a benevolence which should truly, thoroughly recognise in them the image of God.

Perhaps none of us have yet heard or can compre-

heed the tone of voice, in which a man, thoroughly impressed with this sentiment, would speak to a fellow-creature. It is a language hardly known on earth; and no eloquence, I believe, has achieved such wonders as it is destined to accomplish. I must stop, though I have but begun the application of the principle which I have urged. I will close as I began, with saying, that the great revelation which man now needs, is a revelation of man to himself. The faith which is most wanted, is a faith in what we and our fellow-beings may become, a faith in the divine germ or principle in every soul. In regard to most of what are called the mysteries of religion, we may innocently be ignorant. But the mystery within ourselves, the mystery of our spiritual, accountable, immortal nature, it behoves us to explore. Happy are they who have begun to penetrate it, and in whom it has awakened feelings of awe towards themselves, and of deep interest and honor towards their fellow-creatures.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

ROMANS i. 16: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."

PART I.

THESE words of Paul are worthy of his resolute and disinterested spirit. In uttering them he was not an echo of the multitude, a servile repeater of established doctrines. The vast majority around him were ashamed of Jesus. The cross was then coupled with infamy. Christ's name was scorned as a malefactor's, and to profess his religion was to share his disgrace. Since that time what striking changes have occurred! The cross now hangs as an ornament from the neck of beauty. It blazes on the flags of navies, and the standards of armies. Millions bow before it in adoration, as if it were a shrine of the divinity. Of course, the temptation to be ashamed of Jesus is very much diminished. Still it is not wholly removed. Much of the homage now paid to Christianity is outward, political, worldly, and paid to its corruptions much more than to its pure and lofty spirit; and accordingly its conscientious and intrepid friends must not think it a strange thing to be encountered with occasional coldness or reproach. We may

still be tempted to be ashamed of our religion, by being thrown among skeptics, who deny and deride it. We may be tempted to be ashamed of the simple and rational doctrines of Christ, by being brought into connexion with narrow zealots, who enforce their dark and perhaps degrading peculiarities as essential to salvation. We may be tempted to be ashamed of his pure, meek, and disinterested precepts, by being thrown among the licentious, self-seeking, and vindictive. Against these perils we should all go armed. To be loyal to truth and conscience under such trials, is one of the signal proofs of virtue. No man deserves the name of Christian, but he who adheres to his principles amidst the unbelieving, the intolerant, and the depraved.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." So said Paul. So would I say. Would to God that I could catch the spirit as well as the language of the Apostle, and bear my testimony to Christianity with the same heroic resolution. Do any ask, why I join in this attestation to the gospel? Some of my reasons I propose now to set before you; and in doing so, I ask the privilege of speaking, as the Apostle has done, in the first person; of speaking in my own name, and of laying open my own mind in the most direct language. There are cases, in which the ends of public discourse may be best answered by the frank expression of individual feeling; and this mode of address, when adopted with such views, ought not to be set down to the account of egotism.

I proceed to state the reasons why I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; and I begin with one so important, that it will occupy the present discourse.

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because it is *true*. This is my first reason. The religion is *true*, and no consideration but this could induce me to defend it. I adopt it, not because it is popular, for false and ruinous systems have enjoyed equal reputation; nor because it is thought to uphold the order of society, for I believe that nothing but truth can be permanently useful. It is *true*; and I say this not lightly, but after deliberate examination. I am not repeating the accents of the nursery. I do not affirm the truth of Christianity, because I was so taught before I could inquire, or because I was brought up in a community pledged to this belief. It is not unlikely, that my faith and zeal will be traced by some to these sources; and believing such imputations to be groundless, fidelity to the cause of truth binds me to repel them. The circumstance of having been born and educated under Christianity, so far from disposing me to implicit faith, has often been to me the occasion of serious distrust of our religion. On observing how common it is for men of all countries and names, whether Christians, Jews, or Mahometans, to receive the religion of their fathers, I have again and again asked myself, whether I too was not a slave, whether I too was not blindly walking in the path of tradition, and yielding myself as passively as others to an hereditary faith. I distrust and fear the power of numbers and of general opinion over my judgment; and few things incite me more to repel a doctrine than intolerant attempts to force it on my understanding. Perhaps my Christian education and connexions have inclined me to skepticism, rather than bowed my mind to authority.

It may still be said, that the pride and prejudices

and motives of interest, which belong to my profession as a Christian minister, throw a suspiciousness over my reasoning and judgment on the present subject. I reply, that to myself I seem as free from biases of this kind, as the most indifferent person. I have no priestly prepossessions. I know and acknowledge the corruptions and perversions of the ministerial office from the earliest age of the church. I reprobate the tyranny which it exercises so often over the human mind. I recognise no peculiar sanctity in those who sustain it. I think, then, that I come to the examination of Christianity with as few blinding partialities as any man. I indeed claim no exemption from error; I ask no implicit faith in my conclusions; I care not how jealously and thoroughly my arguments are sifted. I only ask, that I may not be prejudged as a servile or interested partisan of Christianity. I ask that I may be heard as a friend of truth, desirous to aid my fellow-creatures in determining a question of great and universal concern. I appear as the advocate of Christianity, solely because it approves itself to my calmest reason as a revelation from God, and as the purest, brightest light which He has shed on the human mind. I disclaim all other motives. No policy, no vassalage to opinion, no dread of reproach even from the good, no private interest, no desire to uphold a useful superstition, nothing in short but a deliberate conviction of the truth of Christianity, induces me to appear in its ranks. I should be ashamed of it, did I not believe it true.

In discussing this subject, I shall express my convictions strongly; I shall speak of infidelity as a gross and perilous error. But in so doing, I beg not to be

understood as passing sentence on the character of individual unbelievers. I shall show that the Christian religion is true, is from God; but I do not therefore conclude, that all who reject it are the enemies of God, and are to be loaded with reproach. I would uphold the truth without ministering to uncharitableness. The criminality, the damnable guilt of unbelief in all imaginable circumstances, is a position which I think untenable; and persuaded as I am, that it prejudices the cause of Christianity, by creating an antipathy between its friends and opposers, which injures both, and drives the latter into more determined hostility to the truth, I think it worthy of a brief consideration in this stage of the discussion.

I lay it down as a principle, that unbelief, considered in itself, has no moral quality, is neither a virtue nor a vice, but must receive its character, whether good or bad, from the dispositions or motives which produce or pervade it. Mere acts of the understanding are neither right nor wrong. When I speak of faith as a holy or virtuous principle, I extend the term beyond its primitive meaning, and include in it not merely the assent of the intellect, but the disposition or temper by which this assent is determined, and which it is suited to confirm; and I attach as broad a signification to unbelief, when I pronounce it a crime. The truth is, that the human mind, though divided by our philosophy into many distinct capacities, seldom or never exerts them separately, but generally blends them in one act. Thus in forming a judgment, it exerts the will and affections, or the moral principles of our nature, as really as the power of thought. Men's passions and interests mix with, and are expressed in, the decisions of the intel-

lect. In the Scriptures, which use language freely, and not with philosophical strictness, faith and unbelief are mental acts of this complex character, or joint products of the understanding and heart; and on this account alone, they are objects of approbation or reproof. In these views, I presume, reflecting Christians of every name agree.

According to these views, opinions cannot be laid down as unerring and immutable signs of virtue and vice. The very same opinion may be virtuous in one man and vicious in another, supposing it, as is very possible, to have originated in different states of mind. For example, if through envy and malignity I should rashly seize on the slightest proofs of guilt in my neighbour, my judgment of his criminality would be morally wrong. Let another man arrive at the same conclusion, in consequence of impartial inquiry and love of truth, and his decision would be morally right. Still more, according to these views, it is possible for the belief of Christianity to be as criminal as unbelief. Undoubtedly the reception of a system, so pure in spirit and tendency as the gospel, is to be regarded in general as a favorable sign. But let a man adopt this religion, because it will serve his interest and popularity; let him shut his mind against objections to it, lest they should shake his faith in a gainful system; let him tamper with his intellect, and for base and selfish ends exhaust its strength in defence of the prevalent faith, and he is just as criminal in believing, as another would be in rejecting Christianity under the same bad impulses. Our religion is at this moment adopted, and passionately defended by vast multitudes, on the ground of the very same pride, worldliness, love of popularity,

and blind devotion to hereditary prejudices, which led the Jews and Heathens to reject it in the primitive age; and the faith of the first is as wanting in virtue, as was the infidelity of the last.

To judge of the character of faith and unbelief, we must examine the times and the circumstances in which they exist. At the first preaching of the gospel, to believe on Christ was a strong proof of an upright mind; to enlist among his followers, was to forsake ease, honor, and wordly success; to confess him was an act of signal loyalty to truth, virtue, and God. To believe in Christ at the present moment has no such significance. To confess him argues no moral courage. It may even betray a servility and worldliness of mind. These remarks apply in their spirit to unbelief. At different periods, and in different conditions of society, unbelief may express very different states of mind. Before we pronounce it a crime, and doom it to perdition, we ought to know the circumstances under which it has sprung up, and to inquire with candor whether they afford no palliation or defence. When Jesus Christ was on earth, when his miracles were wrought before men's eyes, when his voice sounded in their ears, when not a shade of doubt could be thrown over the reality of his supernatural works, and not a human corruption had mingled with his doctrine, there was the strongest presumption against the uprightness and the love of truth of those who rejected him. He knew too the hearts and the lives of those who surrounded him, and saw distinctly in their envy, ambition, worldliness, sensuality, the springs of their unbelief; and accordingly he pronounced it a crime. Since that period, what changes have taken place! Jesus Christ has left the world. His miracles

are events of a remote age, and the proofs of them, though abundant, are to many perfectly unknown; and, what is incomparably more important, his religion has undergone corruption, adulteration, disastrous change, and its likeness to its Founder is in no small degree effaced. The clear, consistent, quickening truth, which came from the lips of Jesus, has been exchanged for a hoarse jargon and vain babblings. The stream, so pure at the fountain, has been polluted and poisoned through its whole course. Not only has Christianity been overwhelmed by absurdities, but by impious doctrines, which have made the Universal Father, now a weak and vain despot, to be propitiated by forms and flatteries, and now an almighty torturer, foreordaining multitudes of his creatures to guilt, and then glorifying his justice by their everlasting woe. When I think what Christianity has become in the hands of politicians and priests, how it has been shaped into a weapon of power, how it has crushed the human soul for ages, how it has struck the intellect with palsy and haunted the imagination with superstitious phantoms, how it has broken whole nations to the yoke, and frowned on every free thought; when I think how, under almost every form of this religion, its ministers have taken it into their own keeping, have hewn and compressed it into the shape of rigid creeds, and have then pursued by menaces of everlasting woe whoever should question the divinity of these works of their hands; when I consider, in a word, how, under such influences, Christianity has been and still is exhibited, in forms which shock alike the reason, conscience, and heart, I feel deeply, painfully, what a different system it is from that which Jesus taught, and I dare not apply to unbelief the terms of condemnation which belonged to the infidelity of the primitive age.

Perhaps I ought to go further. Perhaps I ought to say, that to reject Christianity under some of its corruptions is rather a virtue than a crime. At the present moment, I would ask, whether it is a vice to doubt the truth of Christianity, as it is manifested in Spain and Portugal? When a patriot in those benighted countries, who knows Christianity only as a bulwark of despotism, as a rearer of inquisitions, as a stern jailer immuring wretched women in the convent, as an executioner stained and reeking with the blood of the friends of freedom; I say, when the patriot, who sees in our religion the instrument of these crimes and woes, believes and affirms that it is not from God, are we authorized to charge his unbelief on dishonesty and corruption of mind, and to brand him as a culprit? May it not be that the spirit of Christianity in his heart emboldens him to protest with his lips against what bears the name? And if he thus protest, through a deep sympathy with the oppression and sufferings of his race, is he not nearer the kingdom of God than the priest and inquisitor who boastingly and exclusively assume the Christian name? Jesus Christ has told us, that "this is the condemnation" of the unbelieving, "that they love darkness rather than light;" and who does not see, that this ground of condemnation is removed, just in proportion as the light is quenched, or Christian truth is buried in darkness and debasing error?

I know I shall be told that a man in the circumstances now supposed, would still be culpable for his unbelief, because the Scriptures are within his reach, and these are sufficient to guide him to the true doctrines of Christ. But in the countries of which I have spoken, the Scriptures are not common; and if they were, I apprehend

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[illegible], none of us can draw the line which separates between innocence and guilt in this particular. To measure the responsibility of a man, who doubts or denies Christianity, we must know the history of his mind, his capacity of judgment, the early influences and prejudices to which he was exposed, the forms under which the religion and its proofs first fixed his thoughts, and the opportunities since enjoyed of eradicating errors, which struck root before the power of trying them was unfolded. We are not his judges. At another and an unerring tribunal he must give account.

I cannot, then, join in the common cry against infidelity as the sure mark of a corrupt mind. That unbelief often has its origin in evil dispositions, I cannot doubt. The character of the unbeliever often forces us to acknowledge, that he rejects Christianity to escape its [illegible]; that its purity is its chief offence; that he

seeks infidelity as a refuge from fear and virtuous restraint. But to impute these unholy motives to a man of pure life, is to judge rashly, and it may be unrighteously. I cannot look upon unbelief as essentially and unfailingly a crime. But I do look upon it as among the greatest of calamities. It is the loss of the chief aid of virtue, of the mightiest power over temptation, of the most quickening knowledge of God, of the only unfailing light, of the only sure hope. The unbeliever would gain unspeakably by parting with every possession for the truth which he doubts or rejects. And how shall we win him to the faith? Not by reproach, by scorn, by tones of superiority; but by paying due respect to his understanding, his virtues, and his right of private judgment; by setting before him Christianity in its simple majesty, its reasonableness, and wonderful adaptation to the wants of our spiritual nature; by exhibiting its proofs without exaggeration, yet in their full strength; and, above all, by showing in our own characters and lives, that there is in Christianity a power to purify, elevate, and console, which can be found in no human teaching. These are the true instruments of conversion. The ignorant and superstitious may indeed be driven into a religion by menace and reproach. But the reflecting unbeliever cannot but distrust a cause which admits such weapons. He must be reasoned with as a man, an equal, and a brother. Perhaps we may silence him for a time, by spreading through the community a fanatical excitement, and a persecuting hatred of infidelity. But as by such processes Christianity would be made to take a more unlovely and irrational form, its secret foes would be multiplied; its brightest evidence would be dimmed, its foundation

sapped, its energy impaired; and whenever the time should arrive for throwing off the mask (and that time would come), we should learn, that in the very ranks of its nominal disciples, there had been trained a host of foes, who would burn to prostrate the intolerant faith, which had so long sealed their lips, and trampled on the rights and freedom of the human mind.

According to these views, I do not condemn the unbeliever, unless he bear witness against himself by an immoral and irreligious life. It is not given me to search his heart. But this power is given to himself, and as a friend, I call upon him to exert it; I ask him to look honestly into his own mind, to question his past life, and to pronounce impartial sentence on the causes of his unbelief. Let him ask himself, whether he has inquired into the principles and proofs of Christianity deliberately and in the love of truth; whether the desire to discover and fulfil his duties to God and his fellow-creatures has governed his examination; whether he has surrendered himself to no passions or pursuits which religion and conscience rebuke, and which bar the mind and sear the heart against the truth. If, thus self-questioned, his heart acquit him, let no man condemn him, and let him heed no man's condemnation. But if conscience bear witness against him, he has cause to suspect and dread his unbelief. He has reason to fear, that it is the fruit of a depraved mind, and that it will ripen and confirm the depravity from which it sprung.

I know that there are those, who will construe what they will call my lenity towards unbelief, into treachery towards Christianity. There are those who think, that unless skepticism be ranked among the worst crimes, and the infidel be marked out for abhorrence and dread,

the multitude of men will lose their hold on the gospel. An opinion more discreditable to Christianity cannot easily be advanced by its friends. It virtually admits, that the proofs of our religion, unless examined under the influence of terror, cannot work conviction; that the gospel cannot be left, like other subjects, to the calm and unbiassed judgment of mankind. It discovers a distrust of Christianity, with which I have no sympathy. And here I would remark, that the worst abuses of our religion have sprung from this cowardly want of confidence in its power. Its friends have feared, that it could not stand without a variety of artificial buttresses. They have imagined, that men must now be bribed into faith by annexing to it temporal privileges, now driven into it by menaces and inquisitions, now attracted by gorgeous forms, now awed by mysteries and superstitions; in a word, that the multitude must be imposed upon, or the religion will fall. I have no such distrust of Christianity; I believe in its invincible powers. It is founded in our nature. It meets our deepest wants. Its proofs as well as principles are adapted to the common understandings of men, and need not to be aided by appeals to fear or any other passion, which would discourage inquiry or disturb the judgment. I fear nothing for Christianity, if left to speak in its own tones, to approach men with its unveiled, benignant countenance. I do fear much from the weapons of policy and intimidation, which are framed to uphold the imagined weakness of Christian truth.

I now come to the great object of this discourse, — an exhibition of the proofs of Christianity; — and I be

gin with a topic which is needed to prepare some, if not many, to estimate these proofs fairly, and according to their true weight. I begin with the position, That there is nothing in the general idea of Revelation at which Reason ought to take offence, nothing inconsistent with any established truth, or with our best views of God and Nature. This topic meets a prejudice not very rare. I repeat it then, Revelation is nothing incredible, nothing which carries contradiction on its face, nothing at war with any great principles of reason or experience. On hearing of God's teaching us by some other means than the fixed order of nature, we ought not to be surprised, nor ought the suggestion to awaken resistance in our minds.

Revelation is not at war with nature. From the necessity of the case, the earliest instruction must have come to human beings from this source. If our race had a beginning (and nothing but the insanity of Atheism can doubt this), then its first members, created as they were without human parentage, and having no resource in the experience of fellow-creatures who had preceded them, required an immediate teaching from their Creator; they would have perished without it. Revelation was the very commencement of human history, the foundation of all later knowledge and improvement. It was an essential part of the course of Providence, and must not then be regarded as a discord in God's general system.

Revelation is not at war with nature. Nature prompts us to expect it from the relation which God bears to the human race. The relation of Creator is the most intimate which can subsist; and it leads us to anticipate a free and affectionate intercourse with the creature.

That the Universal Father should be bound by a parental interest to his offspring, that he should watch over and assist the progress of beings whom he has enriched with the divine gifts of reason and conscience, is so natural a doctrine, so accordant with his character, that various sects, both philosophical and religious, both anterior and subsequent to Christianity, have believed, not only in general revelation, but that God reveals himself to every human soul. When I think of the vast capacities of the human mind, of God's nearness to it, and unbounded love towards it, I am disposed to wonder, not that revelations have been made, but that they have not been more variously vouchsafed to the wants of mankind.

Revelation has a striking agreement with the chief method which God has instituted for carrying forward individuals and the race, and is thus in harmony with his ordinary operations. Whence is it, that we all acquire our chief knowledge? Not from the outward universe; not from the fixed laws of material nature; but from intelligent beings, more advanced than ourselves. The teachings of the wise and good are our chief aids. Were our connexion with superior minds broken off, had we no teacher but nature with its fixed laws, its unvarying revolutions of night and day and seasons, we should remain for ever in the ignorance of childhood. Nature is a volume, which we can read only by the help of an intelligent interpreter. The great law under which man is placed, is, that he shall receive illumination and impulse from beings more improved than himself. Now revelation is only an extension of this universal method of carrying forward mankind. In this case, God takes on himself the office

to which all rational beings are called. He becomes an immediate teacher to a few, communicating to them a higher order of truths than had before been attained, which they in turn are to teach to their race. Here is no new power or element introduced into the system, but simply an enlargement of that agency on which the progress of man chiefly depends.

Let me next ask you to consider, Why or for what end God has ordained, as the chief means of human improvement, the communication of light from superior to inferior minds; and if it shall then appear, that revelation is strikingly adapted to promote a similar though more important end, you will have another mark of agreement between revelation and his ordinary Providence. Why is it that God has made men's progress dependent on instruction from their fellow-beings? Why are the more advanced commissioned to teach the less informed? A great purpose, I believe the chief purpose, is, to establish interesting relations among men, to bind them to one another by generous sentiments, to promote affectionate intercourse, to call forth a purer love than could spring from a communication of mere outward gifts. Now it is rational to believe, that the Creator designs to bind his creatures to Himself as truly as to one another, and to awaken towards himself even stronger gratitude, confidence, and love; for these sentiments towards God are more happy and ennobling than towards any other being; and it is plain that revelation, or immediate divine teaching, serves as effectually to establish these ties between God and man, as human teaching to attach men to one another. We see, then, in revelation an end corresponding to what the Supreme Being adopts in his common providence.

That the end here affirmed is worthy of his interposition, who can doubt? His benevolence can propose no higher purpose, than that of raising the minds and hearts of his creatures to himself. His parental character is a pledge that he must intend this ineffable happiness for his rational offspring; and Revelation is suited to this end, not only by unfolding new doctrines in relation to God, but by the touching proof which it carries in itself of the special interest which he takes in his human family. There is plainly an expression of deeper concern, a more affectionate character, in this mode of instruction, than in teaching us by the fixed order of nature. Revelation is God speaking to us in our own language, in the accents which human friendship employs. It shows a love, breaking through the reserve and distance, which we all feel to belong to the method of teaching us by his works alone. It fastens our minds on him. We can look on nature, and not think of the Being whose glory it declares; but God is indissolubly connected with, and indeed is a part of, the idea of revelation. How much nearer does this direct intercourse bring him to the mass of mankind! On this account revelation would seem to me important, were it simply to repeat the teachings of nature. This reiteration of great truths in a less formal style, in kinder, more familiar tones, is peculiarly fitted to awaken the soul to the presence and benignity of its heavenly Parent. I see, then, in revelation a purpose corresponding with that for which human teaching was instituted. Both are designed to bring together the teacher and the taught in pure affections.

Let me next ask you to consider, what is the kind of instruction which the higher minds among men are

chiefly called to impart to the inferior. You will here see another agreement between revelation and that ordinary human teaching, which is the great instrument of improving the race. What kind of instruction is it, which parents, which the aged and experienced, are most anxious to give to the young, and on which the safety of this class mainly depends? It is instruction in relation to the Future, to their adult years, such as is suited to prepare them for the life that is opening before them. It is God's will, when he gives us birth, that we should be forewarned of the future stages of our being, of approaching manhood or womanhood, of the scenes, duties, labors, through which we are to pass; and for this end he connects us with beings, who have traversed the paths on which we are entering, and whose duty it is to train us for a more advanced age. Instruction in regard to Futurity is the great means of improvement. Now the Christian revelation has for its aim to teach us on this very subject; to disclose the life which is before us, and to fit us for it. A Future state is its constant burden. That God should give us light in regard to that state, if he designs us for it, is what we should expect from his solicitude to teach us in regard to what is future in our earthly existence. Nature thrists for, and analogy almost promises, some illumination on the subject of human destiny. This topic I shall insist on more largely hereafter. I wish now simply to show you the agreement of revelation, in this particular, with the ordinary providence of God.

I proceed to another order of reflections, which to my own mind is particularly suited to meet the vague idea, that revelation is at war with nature. To judge

of nature, we should look at its highest ranks of beings. We should inquire of the human soul, which we all feel to be a higher existence than matter. Now I maintain, that there are in the human soul wants, deep wants, which are not met by the influences and teachings, which the ordinary course of things affords. I am aware that this is a topic to provoke distrust, if not derision, in the low-minded and sensual; but I speak what I do know; and nothing moves me so little as the scoffs of men who dispise their own nature. One of the most striking views of human nature, is the disproportion between what it conceives and thirsts for, and what it finds or can secure in the range of the present state. It is prone to stretch beyond its present bounds. Ideas of excellence and happiness spring up, which it cannot realize now. It carries within itself a standard, of which it daily and hourly falls short. This self-contradiction is the source of many sharp pains. There is, in most men, a dim consciousness, at least, of being made for something higher than they have gained, a feeling of internal discord, a want of some stable good, a disappointment in merely outward acquisitions; and in proportion as these convictions and wants become distinct, they break out in desires of illumination and aids from God not found in nature. I am aware, that the wants of which I have spoken are but faintly developed in the majority of men. Accustomed to give their thoughts and strength to the outward world, multitudes do not penetrate and cannot interpret their own souls. They impute to outward causes the miseries which spring from an internal fountain. They do not detain, and are scarcely conscious of the better thoughts and feelings, which sometimes dart through their minds. Still there are few, who are

not sometimes dissatisfied with themselves, who do not feel the wrong which they have done to themselves, and who do not desire a purer and nobler state of mind. The suddenness, with which the multitude are thrilled by the voice of fervent eloquence, when it speaks to them of the spiritual world in tones of reality, shows the deep wants of human nature even amidst ignorance and degradation. But all men do not give themselves wholly to outward things. There are those, and not a few, who are more true to their nature, and ought therefore to be regarded as its more faithful representatives; and in such, the wants, of which I have spoken, are unfolded with energy. There are those, who feel painfully the weight of their present imperfection; who are fired by rare examples of magnanimity and devotion; who desire nothing so intensely as power over temptation, as elevation above selfish passions, as conformity of will to the inward law of duty, as the peace of conscious rectitude and religious trust; who would rejoice to lay down the present life for that spotless, bright, disinterested virtue, of which they have the type or germ in their own minds. Such men can find no resource but in God, and are prepared to welcome a revelation of his merciful purposes as an unspeakable gift. I say, then, that the human mind has wants which nature does not answer. And these are not accidental feelings, unaccountable caprices, but are deep, enduring, and reproduced in all ages under one or another form. They breathe through the works of genius; they burn in the loftiest souls. Here are principles implanted by God in the highest order of his creatures on earth, to which revelation is adapted; and I say, then, that revelation is any thing but hostility to nature.

I will offer but one more view in illustration of this topic. I ask you to consider, on what Principle of human nature the Christian revelation is intended to bear and to exert influence, and then to inquire whether the peculiar importance of this principle be not a foundation for peculiar interposition in its behalf. If so, revelation may be said to be a demand of the human soul, and its imagined incongruity with nature will disappear. For what principle or faculty of the mind, then, was Christianity intended? It was plainly not given to enrich the intellect by teaching philosophy, or to perfect the imagination and taste by furnishing sublime and beautiful models of composition. It was not meant to give sagacity in public life, or skill and invention in common affairs. It was undoubtedly designed to develope all these faculties, but secondarily, and through its influence on a higher principle. It addresses itself primarily, and is especially adapted, to the Moral power in man. It regards and is designed for man as a moral being, endued with conscience or the principle of duty, who is capable of that peculiar form of excellence which we call righteousness or virtue, and exposed to that peculiar evil, guilt. Now the question offers itself, Why does God employ such extraordinary means for promoting virtue rather than science, for aiding conscience rather than intellect and our other powers? Is there a foundation in the moral principle for peculiar interpositions in its behalf? I affirm that there is. I affirm that a broad distinction exists between our moral nature and our other capacities. Conscience is the Supreme power within us. Its essence, its grand characteristic, is Sovereignty. It speaks with a divine authority. Its office is to command, to rebuke, to reward; and happi-

ness and honor depend on the reverence with which we listen to it. All our other powers become useless and worse than useless, unless controlled by the principle of duty. Virtue is the supreme good, the supreme beauty, the divinest of God's gifts, the healthy and harmonious unfolding of the soul, and the germ of immortality. It is worth every sacrifice, and has power to transmute sacrifices and sufferings into crowns of glory and rejoicing. Sin, vice, is an evil of its own kind, and not to be confounded with any other. Who does not feel at once the broad distinction between misfortune and crime, between disease of body and turpitude of soul? Sin, vice, is war with the highest power in our own breasts, and in the universe. It makes a being odious to himself, and arms against him the principle of rectitude in God and in all pure beings. It poisons or dries up the fountains of enjoyment, and adds unspeakable weight to the necessary pains of life. It is not a foreign evil, but a blight and curse in the very centre of our being. Its natural associates are fear, shame, and self-torture; and, whilst it robs the present of consolation, it leaves the future without hope. Now I say, that in this peculiar ruin wrought by moral evil, and in this peculiar worth of moral goodness, we see reasons for special interpositions of God in behalf of virtue, in resistance of sin. It becomes the Infinite Father to manifest peculiar interest in the moral condition and wants of his creatures. Their great and continued corruption is an occasion for peculiar methods of relief; and a revelation given to restore them, and carry them forward to perfection, has an end which justifies, if it does not demand, this signal expression of parental love.

The preceding views have been offered, not as sufficient to prove that a revelation has been given, but for the purpose of removing the vague notion that it is at war with nature, and of showing its consistency with the spirit and principles of the divine administration. I proceed now to consider the direct and positive proofs of Christianity, beginning with some remarks on the nature and sufficiency of the evidence on which it chiefly relies.

Christianity sprung up about eighteen hundred years ago. Of course its evidences are to be sought in history. We must go back to the time of its birth, and understand the condition in which it found the world, as well as the circumstances of its origin, progress, and establishment; and happily, on these points, we have all the light necessary to a just judgment. We must not imagine, that a religion, which bears the date of so distant an age, must therefore be involved in obscurity. We know enough of the earliest times of Christianity to place the question of its truth within our reach. The past may be known as truly as the present; and I deem this principle so important in the present discussion that I ask your attention to it.

The past, I have said, may be known; nor is this all; we derive from it our most important knowledge. Former times are our chief instructors. Our political, as well as religious institutions, our laws, customs, modes of thinking, arts of life, have come down from earlier ages, and most of them are unintelligible without a light borrowed from history.

Not only are we able to know the nearest of past ages, or those which touch on our own times, but those which are remote. No educated man doubts any more

of the victories of Alexander or Cæsar, before Christ, than of Napoleon's conquests in our own day. So open is our communication with some ages of antiquity, so many are the records which they have transmitted, that we know them even better than nearer times; and a religion which grew up eighteen hundred years ago, may be more intelligible and accompanied with more decisive proofs of truth or falsehood, than one which is not separated from us by a fourth part of that duration.

From the nature of things, we may and must know much of the past; for the present has grown out of the past, is its legacy, fruit, representative, and is deeply impressed with it. Events do not expire at the moment of their occurrence. Nothing takes place without leaving traces behind it; and these are in many cases so distinct and various, as to leave not a doubt of their cause. We all understand, how, in the material world, events testify of themselves to future ages. Should we visit an unknown region, and behold masses of lava covered with soil of different degrees of thickness, and surrounding a blackened crater, we should have as firm a persuasion of the occurrence of remote and successive volcanic eruptions, as if we had lived through the ages in which they took place. The chasms of the earth would report how terribly it had been shaken, and the awful might of long-extinguished fires would be written in desolations which ages had failed to efface. Now conquest, and civil and religious revolutions, leave equally their impressions on society, leave institutions, manners, and a variety of monuments, which are inexplicable without them, and which, taken together, admit not a doubt of their occurrence. The past stretches into the future, the present is crowded with it, and can be interpreted only by the light of history.

But besides these effects and remains of earlier times, we have other and more distinct memorials of the past, which, when joined with the former, place it clearly within our knowledge. I refer to books. A book is more than a monument of a preceding age. It is a voice coming to us over the interval of centuries. Language, when written, as truly conveys to us another's mind as when spoken. It is a species of personal intercourse. By it the wise of former times give us their minds as really, as if by some miracle they were to rise from the dead and communicate with us by speech.

From these remarks we learn that Christianity is not placed beyond the reach of our investigations by the remoteness of its origin; and they are particularly applicable to the age in which the gospel was first given to the world. Our religion did not spring up before the date of authentic history. Its birth is not hidden in the obscurity of early and fabulous times. We have abundant means of access to its earliest stages; and, what is very important, the deep and peculiar interest which Christianity has awakened, has fixed the earnest attention of the most learned and sagacious men on the period of its original publication, so that no age of antiquity is so thoroughly understood. Christianity sprung up at a time, when the literature and philosophy of Greece was spread far and wide, and had given a great impulse to the human mind; and when Rome by unexampled conquests had become a centre and bond of union to the civilized world and to many half civilized regions, and had established a degree of communication between distant countries before unknown. We are not, then, left to grope our way by an unsteady light. Our means of information are various and great. We have

incontestable facts in relation to the origin of our religion, from which its truth may be easily deduced. A few of these facts, which form the first steps of our reasoning on this subject, I will now lay before you.

1. First, then, we know with certainty the *time* when Christianity was founded. As to this fact, there is and can be no doubt. Heathen and Christian historians speak on this point with one voice. Christianity was first preached in the age of Tiberius. Not a trace of it exists before that period, and afterwards the marks and proofs of its existence are so obvious and acknowledged as to need no mention. Here is one important fact placed beyond doubt.

2. In the next place, we know the *place* where Christianity sprung up. No one can dispute the country of its birth. Its Jewish origin is not only testified by all history, but is stamped on its front and woven into its frame. The language in which it is conveyed, carries us at once to Judea. Its name is derived from Jewish prophecy. None but Jews could have written the New Testament. So natural, undesigned, and perpetual are the references and allusions of the writers to the opinions and manners of that people, so accustomed are they to borrow from the same source the metaphors, similitudes, types, by which they illustrate their doctrines, that Christianity, as to its outward form, may be said to be steeped in Judaism. We have, then, another established fact. We know where it was born.

3. Again, we know the individual by whom Christianity was founded. We know its Author, and from the nature of the case this fact cannot but be known. The founder of a religion is naturally and necessarily the object of general inquiry. Wherever the new faith

is carried, the first and most eager questions are, "From whom does it come? On whose authority does it rest?" Curiosity is never more intense, than in regard to the individual, who claims a divine commission and sends forth a new religion. He is the last man to be overlooked or mistaken. In the case of Christianity especially, its founder may be said to have been forced on men's notice, for his history forms an essential part of his religion. Christianity is not an abstract doctrine, which keeps its author out of sight. He is its very soul. It rests on him, and finds its best illustration in his life. These reflections however may be spared. The simple consideration, that Christianity must have had an author, and that it has been always ascribed to Jesus, and to no one else, places the great fact, which I would establish, beyond doubt.

4. I next observe, that we not only know the founder of Christianity, but the ministers by whom he published and spread it through the world. A new religion must have propagators, first teachers, and with these it must become intimately associated. A community can no more be ignorant as to the teachers who converted it to a new faith, than as to the conqueror who subjected it to a new government; and where the art of writing is known and used for recording events, the latter fact will not more certainly be transmitted to posterity than the former. We have the testimony of all ages, that the men called Apostles were the first propagators of Christianity, nor have any others been named as sustaining this office; and it is impossible that, on such a point, such testimony should be false.

5. Again; we know not only when, and where, and by whom Christianity was introduced;—we know, from

a great variety of sources, what in the main this religion was, as it came from the hands of its founder. To assure ourselves on this point, we need not recur to any sacred books. From the age following that of Christ and the Apostles, down to the present day, we have a series, and an almost numberless host, of writers on the subject of Christianity; and whilst we discover in them a great diversity of opinions, and opposite interpretations of some of Christ's teachings, yet on the whole they so far agree in the great facts of his history, and in certain great principles of his religion, that we cannot mistake as to the general character of the system which he taught. There is not a shadow of reason for the opinion that the original system which Jesus taught was lost, and a new one substituted and fastened on the world in his name. The many and great corruptions of Christianity did not and could not hide its principal features. The greatest corruptions took place in the century which followed the death of the Apostles, when certain wild and visionary sects endeavoured to establish a union between the new religion and the false philosophy to which they had been wedded in their heathen state. You may judge of their character and claims, when I tell you, that they generally agreed in believing, that the God who made the world, and who was worshipped by the Jews, was not the supreme God, but an inferior and imperfect Deity, and that matter had existed from eternity, and was essentially and unchangeably evil. Yet these sects endeavoured to sustain themselves on the writings which the great body of Christians received and honored as the works of the Apostles; and, amidst their delusions, they recognised and taught the miracles of Christ, his

resurrection, and the most important principles of his religion; so that the general nature of Christianity, as it came from its Founder, may be ascertained beyond a doubt. Here another great point is fixed.

6. I have now stated to you several particulars relating to Christianity, which admit no doubt; and these indisputable facts are of great weight in a discussion of the Christian evidences. There is one point more, of importance, which cannot be settled so expeditiously as these. I hope, however, enough may be said to place it beyond doubt, without exceeding the limits of a discourse; and I invite to it your serious attention. I say, then, that we not only know in general what Christianity was at its first promulgation; but we know precisely what its first propagators taught, for we have their writings. We have their religion under their own hands. We have particularly four narratives of the life, works, and words of their Master, which put us in possession of his most private as well as public teaching. It is true, that without those writings we should still have strong arguments for the truth of Christianity; but we should be left in doubt as to some of its important principles; and its internal evidence, which corroborates, and, as some think, exceeds the external, would be very much impaired. The possession of the writings of the first propagators of the gospel, must plainly render us great aid in judging of its claims. These writings, I say, we have, and this point I would now establish.

I am aware that the question, to which I now ask your attention, is generally confined to professed students. But it is one on which men of good sense are competent to judge, and its great importance gives it a claim to the serious consideration of every Christian.

The question is, whether the four Gospels are genuine, that is, whether they were written by those to whom they are ascribed. To answer it, let us consider how we determine the genuineness of books in general. I begin with the obvious remark, that to know the author of a work, it is not necessary that we should be eye-witnesses of its composition. Perhaps of the numberless publications of the present day, we have not seen one growing under the pen of the writer. By far the greater number come to us across the ocean, and yet we are as confident in regard to their authors as if we had actually seen them first committed to paper. The ascription of a book to an individual, during his life, by those who are interested in him, and who have the best means of knowing the truth, removes all doubts as to its author. A strong and wide-spread conviction of this kind must have a cause, and can only be explained by the actual production of the work by the reputed writer. It should here be remembered that there is a strong disposition in men to ascertain the author of an important and interesting work. We have had a remarkable illustration of this in our own times. The author of "Waverley" saw fit to wrap himself for a time in mystery; and what was the consequence? No subject in politics or science was agitated more generally than the question to whom the work belonged. It was not only made a topic in almost every periodical publication, but one book was expressly written to solve the problem. The instance, I know, was remarkable; but this inquisitiveness in regard to books is a principle of our nature, and is particularly active, when the book in debate is a work of singular authority.

I have spoken of the confidence which we feel as to

the authors of books published in our own times. But our certainty is not confined to these. Every reading man is as sure that Hume and Robertson wrote the histories which bear their names, as that Scott has in our own time sent out the "Life of Bonaparte." Those eminent men were born more than a hundred years ago, and they died before the birth of most to whom I speak. But the communication between their times and our own is so open and various, that we know their literary labors as well as those of the present day. Not a few persons now living have had intercourse with some of the contemporaries of these historians; and through this channel in particular, we of this generation have the freest access to the preceding, and know its convictions in regard to the authors of interesting books as fully as if we had lived in it ourselves. That the next age will have the same communication with the present as the present has with the past, and that these convictions of our predecessors will be transmitted by us to our immediate successors, you will easily comprehend; and you will thus learn the respect which is due to the testimony of the third generation on such a subject.

In what has now been said, we see with what confidence and certainty we determine the authors of writings published in our own age or in the times nearest our own. These remarks may be easily applied to the productions of antiquity. When the question arises, whether an ancient book was written by the individual whose name it bears, we must inquire into the opinion of his contemporaries, or of those who succeeded his contemporaries so nearly as to have intimate communication with them. The competency of these to a just

judgment on the subject, we have seen; and if they have transmitted their convictions to us in undisputed writings, it ought to be decisive. On this testimony, we ascribe many ancient books to their authors with the firmest faith; and, in truth, we receive as genuine many works of antiquity on far inferior proofs. There are many books of which no notice can be found for several ages after the time of their reputed authors. Still the fact, that, as soon as they are named, they are ascribed undoubtingly, and by general consent, to certain authors, is esteemed a sufficient reason for regarding them as their productions, unless some opposite proof can be adduced. This general reception of a work as having come from a particular writer, is an effect which requires a cause; and the most natural and obvious explanation of his being named, rather than any other man, is, that he actually composed it.

I now proceed to apply these principles to the four histories of Christ, commonly called Gospels. The question is, what testimony respecting their authors has come down to us from the age of their reputed authors, or from times so near it and so connected with it, as to be faithful representatives of its convictions. By this testimony, as we have seen, the genuineness of the books must be decided. And I begin with admitting that no evidence on the subject is to be derived from contemporary writers. No author, living in the age of the first propagators of Christianity, has named the Gospels. The truth is, that no undisputed writings of their immediate converts have been preserved. A few tracts, bearing the name of men acquainted with the Apostles, have indeed come down to us; but so much uncertainty hangs over their origin, that I am

unwilling to ground on them any reasoning. Nor ought we to wonder that the works of private Christians of the primitive age are wanting to us; for that was an age of persecution, when men were called to *die* rather than *write* for their religion. I suppose too, that during the times of the Apostles, little importance was attached to any books but such as were published or authorized by these eminent men; and, of course, what was written by others was little circulated, and soon passed away.

The undisputed writings of the early Christians begin about seventy years after the times of the Apostles. At that period there probably remained none of the first converts or contemporaries of the Apostles. But there were living not a few, who had been acquainted with the last survivors of that honored generation. When the Apostles died, they must have left behind a multitude who had known them; and of these not a few must have continued many years, and must have had intercourse with the new generation which sprung up after the apostolic age. Now in the times of this generation, the series of Christian authors begins. Although, then, we have no productions of the apostolic age to bear witness to the Gospels, we have writings from the ages which immediately followed it, and which, from their connexion with it, ought, as we have seen, to be regarded as most credible witnesses on such a subject. What, then, do these writings teach? I answer, Their testimony is clear and full. We learn from them, not only that the Gospels existed in those times, but that they were widely diffused, that they were received as the writings of the men whose names they bear, and that they were regarded with a confidence and veneration yielded to no other books. They are quoted as books given by their

revered authors to the Christian community, to be public and enduring records of the religion; and they are spoken of as read in the assemblies which were held for the inculcation and extension of the faith. I ask you to weigh this testimony. It comes to us from times connected intimately with the first age. Had the Gospels been invented and first circulated among the generation which succeeded the Apostles, could that generation have received them, as books known and honored before their time, and as the most authoritative and precious records transmitted to them from their fathers and predecessors? The case may seem too plain to require explanation; but as many are unaccustomed to inquiries of this kind, I will offer an example. You well know, that nearly a century ago a great religious excitement was spread through this country chiefly by the ministry of Whitefield. Suppose now that four books were at this moment to come forth, bearing the names of four of the most distinguished men of that period, of Whitefield, of the venerable Edwards, and of two others intimately associated with them in their religious labors; and suppose these books not only to furnish narratives of what then took place, but to contain principles and rules urged with all possible earnestness and authority on the disciples or admirers of these religious leaders. Do you think it possible that their followers of the present day, and the public, could be made to believe, that these books had been published by their pretended authors, had been given as standards to a religious community, and had been handed down as venerated books, when no such works had been heard of before? This is but a faint illustration; for Whitefield and Edwards are names of little weight or authority, compared with what the Apostles possessed in the primitive church.

We have, then, strong and sufficient reasons for believing that the histories called Gospels were received, in the times of the Apostles, as works of those whose names they bear; and were handed down as theirs with veneration by their contemporaries. Will any say that all this may be true, but that, during the lives of the Apostles, books forged in their names may have obtained general currency? To this extravagant supposition it would be sufficient to reply, according to my previous remarks, that the general ascription of a book to an author during his life, is the ground on which the genuineness of the most unquestioned works depends. But I would add, that this evidence is singularly conclusive in the present case. The original propagators of Christianity, to whom the Gospels were ascribed, were, from their office, among the public men of their age. They must have travelled extensively. They must have been consulted by inhabitants of various countries on the subject of the new religion. They must have been objects of deep interest to the first converts. They lived in the world's eye. Their movements, visits, actions, words, and writings, must have awakened attention. Books from their hands must have produced a great sensation. We cannot conceive a harder task, than to impose writings, forged in their name, on Christians and Christian communities, thus intimately connected with them, and so alive to their efforts for the general cause. The opportunities of detecting the falsehood were abundant; and to imagine falsehood to prosper under such circumstances, argues a strange ignorance of literary history and of human nature.

Let me add, that the motives of the first Christians, to ascertain distinctly whether writings ascribed to the

Apostles were truly theirs, were the strongest which can be conceived. I have mentioned, in my previous remarks, the solicitude of the world to learn the author of "Waverley." The motive was mere curiosity; and yet to what earnest inquiries were multitudes impelled. The name of the author was of little or no moment. The book was the same, its portraits equally vivid, its developements of the human heart equally true and powerful, whether the author were known or not. So it is with most works. Books of science, philosophy, morals, and polite literature, owe their importance and authority, not to their writers, but to their contents. Now, the four Gospels were different in this respect. They were not the same to the first converts, come from whom they might. If written by Apostles or by their associates, they had an authority and sacredness, which could belong to them on no other condition. They became books of laws to the Christian community, became binding on their consciences and lives. To suppose such books received blindly and without inquiry, by great numbers who had all the means of ascertaining their true origin, is to suppose the first converts insane or idiots, a charge which I believe their worst enemies will not think of urging against them, and which the vast superiority of their religious and moral system to all the philosophical systems of the times abundantly disproves.

I have now finished what is called the historical or external evidence of the genuineness of the four Gospels; that is, the evidence drawn from their being received and revered as the writings of the Apostles in the first and succeeding ages of Christianity. But before leaving this head, I would notice a difficulty which may

press on some minds. I suppose, that many of you have heard, that very early, probably about the beginning of the second century, writings were forged in the name of the Apostles; and some may ask why the four Gospels may not belong to this description. The answer is, that the Gospels, as we have seen, were received and honored by the great body of Christians, in the first and succeeding ages of Christianity, as writings of Apostles or their associates. The forgeries are known to be forgeries, because they were not so received, because they were held in no veneration, but were rejected as fictitious by the Christian community. Here is a broad line of distinction. It must not surprise us, that in the great excitement produced by the first publication and triumphs of Christianity, a variety of extravagant notions should spring up, and that attempts should be made to blend the new religion with established systems; and as the names of the first propagators of the Gospel were held in peculiar reverence, we cannot wonder that the leaders of sects should strive to attach an apostolic sanction to their opinions, by sending abroad partly true and partly false accounts of the preaching of these eminent men. Whether these writings were sent forth as compositions of the Apostles, or only as records of their teaching, made by their hearers, is a question open to debate; but as to their origin there can be little doubt. We can account for their existence, and for the degree of favor which they obtained. They were generally written to give authority to the dreams or speculations of some extravagant sects, to which they were very much confined, and with which most of them passed away. There is not a shadow of reason for confounding with these our Gospels, which were spread

from the beginning through the Christian world, and were honored and transmitted as the works of the venerated men by whose names they were called.

Having now given the historical argument in favor of the genuineness of the Gospels, that is, in favor of their being written by their reputed authors, I now add, that there are several presumptive and internal proofs of the same truth, which, taken alone, have great weight, and, when connected with the preceding, form an amount of evidence not easily withstood. I have time to glance at only a few of these.

It is a presumption in favor of the claims of an author, that the book ascribed to him has never been assigned to any other individual. Now I am not aware, that unbelief has in any age named any individuals, to whom the Gospels may be traced rather than to those whose names they bear. We are not called upon to choose between different writers. In common cases, this absence of rival claims is considered as decisive in favor of the reputed author, unless the books themselves give ground to suspect another hand. Why shall not this principle be applied to the Gospels as well as to all other works?

Another presumption in favor of the belief that these histories were written by the first propagators of Christianity, arises from the consideration, that such books were to be expected from them. It is hardly conceivable that the Apostles, whose zeal carried abroad their system through so many nations, and who lived in an age of reading and writing, should leave their doctrines to tradition, should neglect the ordinary precaution of embodying them in the only permanent form, the only one in which they could be accurately transmitted, and

by which all other systems were preserved. It is reasonable to suppose that they wrote what they taught; and if so, it is hardly possible that their writings should be lost. Their accounts must have been received and treasured up just as we know the Gospels were cherished; and hence arises a strong presumption in favor of the genuineness of these books.

Again; these books carry one strong mark of having been written in the time of the Apostles. They contain no trace of later times, nothing to indicate that the authors belonged to another age. Now to those of you, who are acquainted with such subjects, it is hardly necessary to observe, how difficult it is for a writer to avoid betraying the period in which he lives; and the cause is very obvious. Every age has its peculiarities, has manners, events, feelings, words, phrases of its own; and a man brought up among these falls so naturally under their influence, and incorporates them so fully with his own mind, that they break out and manifest themselves, almost necessarily and without his consciousness, in his words and writings. The present makes an impression incomparably more vivid than the past, and accordingly traces of the real age of a writer may almost always be discovered by a critical eye, however anxious he may be to assume the style and character of a preceding age. Now the Gospels betray no marks of the feelings, manners, contentions, events of a period later than that in which the Apostles lived; and when we consider, that, with the exception of Luke's history, they have all the appearance of having come from plain men, unused to composition, this argument applies to them with peculiar force. Under this head, I might place before you the evidence of the genuine-

s of these books derived from the language, dialect, m, in which they are written. You can easily under- ıd, that by these helps the country and age of a ting may often be traced; but the argument belongs the learned. It may however be satisfactory to w, that the profoundest scholars see in the dialect idiom of the Gospels, a precise accordance with ıt might be expected of Jews, writing in the age of Apostles.

Another internal proof, and one within the reach of may be gathered from the style and character of evangelical narratives. They are written with the plicity, minuteness, and ease, which are the natural es of truth, which belong to writers thoroughly ac- ınted with their subjects, and writing from reality. u discover in them nothing of the labor, caution, and indistinctness, which can scarcely be escaped by men who are assuming a character not their own, and aiming to impose on the world. There is a difference which we have all discerned and felt, though we cannot describe it, between an honest, simple-hearted witness, who tells what he has seen or is intimately acquainted with, and the false witness, who affects an intimate knowledge of events and individuals, which are in whole or in part his own fabrication. Truth has a native frankness, an unaffected freedom, a style and air of its own, and never were narratives more strongly characterized by these than the Gospels. It is a striking circumstance in these books, that whilst the life and character which they portray, are the most extraordinary in history, the style is the most artless. There is no straining for epithets or for elevation of language to suit the dignity of the great personage who is the sub-

ject. You hear plain men telling you what they know, of a character which they venerated too much to think of adorning or extolling. It is also worthy of remark, that the character of Jesus, though the most peculiar and exalted in history, though the last to be invented and the hardest to be sustained, is yet unfolded through a great variety of details and conditions, with perfect unity and consistency. The strength of this proof can only be understood by those who are sufficiently acquainted with literary history, to appreciate the difficulty of accomplishing a consistent and successful forgery. Such consistency is, in the present case, an almost infallible test. Suppose four writers, of a later age, to have leagued together in the scheme of personating the first propagators of Christianity, and of weaving, in their name, the histories of their Master's life. Removed as these men would have been from the original, and having no model or type of his character in the elevation of their own minds, they must have protrayed him with an unsteady hand, must have marred their work with incongruous features, must have brought down their hero on some occasion to the ordinary views and feelings of men, and in particular must have been warped in their selection and representation of incidents by the private purpose which led them to this singular coöperation. That four writers, under such circumstances, should sustain throughout so peculiar and elevated a character as Jesus, and should harmonize with each other in the delineation, would be a prodigy which no genius, however preëminent, could achieve. I say, then, that the narratives bear strong internal marks of having been drawn from the living original, by those who had the best means of knowing his character and life.

So various, strong, sufficient are the proofs that the four Gospels are the works of the first preachers of Christianity, whose name they bear. I will only add, that the genuineness of few ancient books is supported by proofs equally strong. Most of the works, which have come down to us from antiquity, and which are ascribed to their reputed writers with undoubting confidence, are so ascribed on evidence inferior to that on which the claims of the Evangelists rest. On this point therefore not a doubt should remain.

Here I pause. The proofs of Christianity, which are involved in or founded on the facts now established, will be the subjects of future discussion.

PART II.

I HAVE now stated some of the great facts relating to the origin of Christianity, of which we have clear and full proof. We know when and where this religion sprung up. We know its Author, and the men whom he employed as the first propagators of his doctrine. We know the great features of the religion as it was originally taught; and still more, we have the writings of its first teachers, by which its precise character is placed beyond doubt. I now proceed to lay before you some of the arguments in support of Christianity, which are involved in or are founded on these facts. I must confine myself to a few, and will select those to which some justice may be done in the compass of a discourse.

I. I believe Christianity to be true, or to have come from God, because it seems to me impossible to trace it to any other origin. It must have had a cause, and no other adequate cause can be assigned. The incongruity between this religion and all the circumstances amidst which it grew up, is so remarkable, that we are compelled to look beyond and above this world for its explanation. When I go back to the origin of Christianity, and place myself in the age and country of its birth, I can find nothing in the opinions of men, or in the state of society, which can account for its beginning or diffusion. There was no power on earth to

create or uphold such a system. There was nothing congenial with it in Judaism, in heathenism, or in the state of society among the most cultivated communities. If you study the religions, governments, and philosophical systems of that age, you will discover in them not even a leaning towards Christianity. It sprung up in opposition to all, making no compromise with human prejudice or passion; and it sprung up, not only superior to all, but possessing at its very beginning a perfection, which has been the admiration of ages, and which, instead of being dimmed by time, has come forth more brightly, in proportion to the progress of the human mind.

I know, indeed, that, at the origin of our religion, the old heathen worship had fallen into disrepute among the enlightened classes through the Roman Empire, and was gradually losing its hold on the populace. Accordingly some have pretended that Christianity grew from the ruins of the ancient faith. But this is not true; for the decline of the heathen systems was the product of causes singularly adverse to the origination of such a system as Christianity. One cause was the monstrous depravity of the age, which led multitudes to an utter scorn of religion in all its forms and restraints, and which prepared others to exchange their old worship for still grosser and more licentious superstitions, particularly for the magical arts of Egypt. Surely this corruption of manners, this wide-wasting moral pestilence, will not be considered by any as a germ of the Christian religion. Another principal agent in loosening the foundations of the old systems, was Philosophy, a noble effort indeed of the human intellect, but one which did nothing to prepare the way for Christianity.

The most popular systems of philosophy at the birth of Christianity were the Skeptical and the Epicurean, the former of which turned religion into a jest, denied the possibility of arriving at truth, and cast the mind on an ocean of doubt in regard to every subject of inquiry; whilst the latter placed happiness in ease, inculcated a calm indifference both as to this world and the next, and would have set down the Christian doctrine of self-sacrifice, of suffering for truth and duty, as absolute insanity. Now I ask in what single point do these systems touch Christianity, or what impulse could they have given to its invention. There was indeed another philosophical sect of a nobler character; I mean the Stoical. This maintained that virtue was the supreme good, and it certainly nurtured some firm and lofty spirits amidst the despotism which then ground all classes in the dust. But the self-reliance, sternness, apathy, and pride of the Stoic, his defiance and scorn of mankind, his want of sympathy with human suffering, and his extravagant exaggerations of his own virtue, placed this sect in singular opposition to Christianity; so that our religion might as soon have sprung from Skepticism and Epicureanism, as from Stoicism. There was another system, if it be worthy of the name, which prevailed in Asia, and was not unknown to the Jews, often called the Oriental philosophy. But this, though certainly an improvement on the common heathenism, was visionary and mystical, and placed happiness in an intuition or immediate perception of God, which was to be gained by contemplation and ecstasies, by emaciation of the body, and desertion of the world. I need not tell you how infinitely removed was the practical, benevolent spirit of Christianity, from this spurious sanctity and

profitless enthusiasm. I repeat it, then, that the various causes which were silently operating against the established heathen systems in the time of Christ, had no tendency to suggest and spread such a religion as he brought, but were as truly hostile to it as the worst forms of heathenism.

We cannot find, then, the origin of Christianity in the heathen world. Shall we look for it in the Jewish? This topic is too familiar to need much exposition. You know the character, feelings, expectations of the descendants of Abraham at the appearing of Jesus; and you need not be told, that a system, more opposed to the Jewish mind than that which he taught, cannot be imagined. There was nothing friendly to it in the soil or climate of Judea. As easily might the luxuriant trees of our forest spring from the sands of an Arabian desert. There was never perhaps a national character so deeply stamped as the Jewish. Ages after ages of unparalleled suffering have done little to wear away its indelible features. In the time of Jesus the whole influence of education and religion was employed to fix it in every member of the state. In the bosom of this community, and among its humblest classes, sprung up Christianity, a religion as unfettered by Jewish prejudices, as untainted by the earthly, narrow views of the age, as if it had come from another world. Judaism was all around it, but did not mar it by one trace, or sully its brightness by a single breath. Can we find, then, the cause of Christianity in the Jewish any more than in the heathen world?

Christianity, I maintain, was not the growth of any of the circumstances, principles, or feelings of the age in which it appeared. In truth, one of the great dis-

tinctions of the Gospel is, that it did not *grow*. The conception, which filled the mind of Jesus, of a religion more spiritual, generous, comprehensive, and unworldly than Judaism, and destined to take its place, was not of gradual formation. We detect no signs of it, and no efforts to realize it, before his time; nor is there an appearance of its having been gradually matured by Jesus himself. Christianity was delivered from the first in its full proportions, in a style of singular freedom and boldness, and without a mark of painful elaboration. This suddenness with which this religion broke forth, this maturity of the system at the very moment of its birth, this absence of gradual developement, seems to me a strong mark of its divine original. If Christianity be a human invention, then I can be pointed to something in the history of the age which impelled and fitted the mind of its author to its production; then I shall be able to find some germ of it, some approximation to it, in the state of things amidst which it first appeared. How was it, that from thick darkness there burst forth at once meridian light? Were I told that the sciences of the civilized world had sprung up to perfection at once, amidst a barbarous horde, I should pronounce it incredible. Nor can I easily believe, that Christianity, the religion of unbounded love, a religion which broke down the barrier between Jew and Gentile, and the barriers between nations, which proclaimed one Universal Father, which abolished forms and substituted the worship of the soul, which condemned alike the false greatness of the Roman and the false holiness of the Jew, and which taught an elevation of virtue, that the growing knowledge of succeeding ages has made more admirable;— I say, I cannot easily believe that such a religion was suddenly,

immediately struck out by human ingenuity, among a people distinguished by bigotry and narrowness of spirit, by superstitious reliance on outward worship, by hatred and scorn of other nations, and by the proud, impatient hope of soon bending all nations to their sway.

Christianity, I repeat it, was not the growth of the age in which it appeared. It had no sympathy with that age. It was the echo of no sect or people. It stood alone at the moment of its birth. It used not a word of conciliation. It stooped to no error or passion. It had its own tone, the tone of authority and superiority to the world. It struck at the root of what was everywhere called glory, reversed the judgments of all former ages, passed a condemning sentence on the idols of this world's admiration, and held forth, as the perfection of human nature, a spirit of love, so pure and divine, so free and full, so mild and forgiving, so invincible in fortitude yet so tender in its sympathies, that even now few comprehend it in its extent and elevation. Such a religion had not its origin in this world.

I have thus sought to unfold one of the evidences of Christianty. Its incongruity with the age of its birth, its freedom from earthly mixtures, its original, unborrowed, solitary greatness, and the suddenness with which it broke forth amidst the general gloom, these are to me strong indications of its divine descent. I cannot reconcile them with a human origin.

II. Having stated the argument in favor of Christianity, derived from the impossibility of accounting for it by the state of the world at the time of its birth, I proceed, in the second place, to observe, that it cannot be accounted for by any of the motives which instigate men

to the fabrication of religions. Its aims and objects are utterly irreconcilable with imposture. They are pure, lofty, and worthy of the most illustrious delegate of heaven. This argument deserves to be unfolded with some particularity.

Men act from Motives. The inventors of religions have purposes to answer by them. Some systems have been framed by legislators to procure reverence to their laws, to bow the minds of the people to the civil power; and some have been forged by priests, to establish their sway over the multitude, to form themselves into a dominant caste, and to extort the wealth of the industrious. Now I affirm, that Christianity cannot be ascribed to any selfish, ambitious, earthly motive. It is suited to no private end. Its purpose is generous and elevated, and thus bears witness to its heavenly origin.

The great object which has seduced men to pretend to inspiration, and to spread false religions, has been Power, in one form or another, sometimes political power, sometimes spiritual, sometimes both. Is Christianity to be explained by this selfish aim? I answer, No. I affirm that the love of power is the last principle to be charged on the Founder of our religion. Christianity is distinguished by nothing more than by its earnest enforcement of a meek and humble spirit, and by its uncompromising reprobation of that passion for dominion, which had in all ages made the many the prey of the few, and had been worshipped as the attribute and impulse of the greatest minds. Its tone on this subject was original, and altogether its own. Jesus felt, as none had felt before, and as few feel now, the baseness of selfish ambition, and the grandeur of that benev-

olence which waves every mark of superiority, that it may more effectually bless mankind. He taught this lesson, not only in the boldest language, but, accommodating himself to the emblematical mode of religious instruction prevalent in the East, he set before his disciples a little child as their pattern, and himself washed their feet. His whole life was a commentary on his teaching. Not a trace of the passion for distinction and sway can be detected in the artless narratives of his historians. He wore no badge of superiority, exacted no signs of homage, coveted no attentions, resented no neglect. He discouraged the ruler who prostrated himself before him with flattering salutations, but received with affectionate sensibility the penitent who bathed his feet with her tears. He lived with his obscure disciples as a friend, and mixed freely with all ranks of the community. He placed himself in the way of scorn, and advanced to meet a death, more suited than any other imaginable event, to entail infamy on his name. Stronger marks of an infinite superiority to what the world calls glory, cannot be conceived than we meet in the history of Jesus.

I have named two kinds of power, Political and Spiritual, as the ordinary objects of false religions. I wish to show you more particularly the elevation of Christianity above these aims. That the Gospel was not framed from political purposes, is too plain to require proof; but its peculiarity in this respect is not sufficiently considered. In ancient times, religion was everywhere a national concern. In Judea the union between religion and government was singularly close; and political sovereignty was one of the chief splendors, with which the Jewish imagination had surround-

ed the expected Messiah. That in such an age and country, a religion should arise, which hardly seems to know that government exists; which makes no reference to it except in a few general inculcations of obedience to the civil powers; which says not a word nor throws out a hint of allying itself with the state; which assumes to itself no control of political affairs, and intermeddles with no public concerns; which has no tendency, however indirect, to accumulate power in particular hands; which provides no form of national worship as a substitute for those which it was intended to destroy; and which treats the distinctions of rank and office as worthless in comparison with moral influence and an unostentatious charity; — that such a religion should spring up in such a state of the world is a remarkable fact. We here see a broad line between Christianity and other systems, and a striking proof of its originality and elevation. Other systems were framed for communities; Christianity approached men as Individuals. It proposed, not the glory of the state, but the perfection of the individual mind. So far from being contrived to build up political power, Christianity tends to reduce and gradually to supplant it, by teaching men to substitute the sway of truth and love for menace and force, by spreading through all ranks a feeling of brotherhood altogether opposed to the spirit of domination, and by establishing principles which nourish self-respect in every human being, and teach the obscurest to look with an undazzled eye on the most powerful of their race.

Christianity bears no mark of the hands of a politician. One of its main purposes is to extinguish the very spirit which the ambitious statesman most anxiously

Neither is it a narrow creed, or a mass of doctrines which find no support in our rational nature. It may be summed up in a few great, universal, immutable principles, which reason and conscience, as far as they are unfolded, adopt and rejoice in, as their own everlasting laws, and which open perpetually enlarging views to the mind. As far as I am a Christian, I am free. My religion lays on me not one chain. It does not prescribe a certain range for my mind, beyond which nothing can be learned. It speaks of God as the Universal Father, and sends me to all his works for instruction. It does not hem me round with a mechanical ritual, does not enjoin forms, attitudes, and hours of prayer, does not descend to details of dress and food, does not put on me one outward badge. It teaches and enkindles love to God, but commands no precise expressions of this sentiment. It prescribes prayer; but lays the chief stress on the prayer of the closet, and treats all worship as worthless but that of the mind and heart. It teaches us to do good, but leaves us to devise for ourselves the means by which we may best serve mankind. In a word, the whole religion of Christ may be summed up in the love of God and of mankind, and it leaves the individual to cherish and express this spirit by the methods most accordant with his own condition and peculiar mind. Christianity is eminently the religion of freedom. The views which it gives of the parental, impartial, universal goodness of God, and of the equal right of every human being to inquire into his will, and its inculcations of candor, forbearance, and mutual respect, contribute alike to freedom of thought and enlargement of the heart. I repeat it, Christianity lays on me no chains. It is any thing but a contrivance for spirtual domination.

I am aware that I shall be told, that Christianity, if judged by its history, has no claim to the honorable title of a religion of liberty. I shall be told, that no system of heathenism ever weighed more oppressively on men's souls; that the Christian ministry has trained tyrants, who have tortured, now the body with material fire, and now the mind with the dread of fiercer flames, and who have proscribed and punished free thought and free speech as the worst of crimes. I have no disposition to soften the features of priestly oppression; but I say, let not Christianity be made to answer for it. Christianity gives its ministers no such power. They have usurped it in the face of the sternest prohibitions, and in opposition to the whole spirit of their Master. Christianity institutes no priesthood, in the original and proper sense of that word. It has not the name of priest among its officers; nor does it confer a shadow of priestly power. It invests no class of men with peculiar sanctity, ascribing to their intercessions a special influence over God, or suspending the salvation of the private Christian on ceremonies which they alone can administer. Jesus indeed appointed twelve of his immediate disciples to be the great instruments of propagating his religion; but nothing can be simpler than their office. They went forth to make known through all nations the life, death, resurrection, and teachings of Jesus Christ; and this truth they spread freely and without reserve. They did not give it as a mystery to a few who were to succeed them in their office, and according to whose direction it was to be imparted to others. They communicated it to the whole body of converts, to be their equal and common property, thus securing to all the invaluable rights of the mind. It

is true, they appointed ministers or teachers in the various congregations which they formed; and in that early age, when the religion was new and unknown, and when oral teaching was the only mode of communicating it, there seems to have been no way for its diffusion but this appointment of the most enlightened disciples to the work of instruction. But the New Testament nowhere intimates, that these men were to monopolize the privilege of studying their religion, or of teaching it to others. Not a single man can claim under Christianity the right to interpret it exclusively, or to impose his interpretation on his brethren. The Christian minister enjoys no nearer access to God, and no promise of more immediate illumination, than other men. He is not intrusted with the Christian records more than they, and by these records it is both their right and duty to try his instructions. I have here pointed out a noble peculiarity of Christianity. It is the religion of liberty. It is in no degree tainted with the passion for spiritual power. "Call no man master, for ye are all brethren," is its free and generous inculcation, and to every form of freedom it is a friend and defence.

We have seen that Christianity is not to be traced to the love of power, that master passion in the authors of false religions. I add, that no other object of a selfish nature could have led to its invention. The Gospel is not of this world. At the time of its origin no ingenuity could have brought it to bear on any private or worldly interest. Its spirit is self-denial. Wealth, ease, and honor, it counts among the chief perils of life, and it insists on no duty more earnestly than on that of putting them to hazard and casting them from us, if the cause of truth and humanity so require. And these

maxims were not mere speculations or rhetorical commonplaces in the times of Christ and his Apostles. The first propagators of Christianity were called upon to practise what they preached, to forego every interest on its account. They could not but foreknow, that a religion so uncompromising and pure would array against them the world. They did not merely take the chance of suffering, but were sure that the whole weight of scorn, pain, and worldly persecution would descend on their heads. How inexplicable, then, is Christianity by any selfish object, or any low aim?

The Gospel has but one object, and that too plain to be mistaken. In reading the New Testament, we see the greatest simplicity of aim. There is no lurking purpose, no by-end, betraying itself through attempts to disguise it. A perfect singleness of design runs through the records of the religion, and is no mean evidence of their truth. This end of Christianity is the moral perfection of the human soul. It aims and it tends, in all its doctrines, precepts, and promises, to rescue men from the power of moral evil; to unite them to God by filial love, and to one another in the bonds of brotherhood; to inspire them with a philanthropy as meek and unconquerable as that of Christ; and to kindle intense desire, hope, and pursuit of celestial and immortal virtue.

And now, I ask, what is the plain inference from these views? If Christianity can be traced to no selfish or worldly motive, if it was framed, not for dominion, not to compass any private purpose, but to raise men above themselves, and to conform them to God, can we help pronouncing it worthy of God? And to whom but to God can we refer its origin? Ought we

not to recognise in the first propagators of such a faith the holiest of men, the friends of their race, and the messengers of Heaven? Christianity, from its very nature, repels the charge of imposture. It carries in itself the proof of pure intention. Bad men could not have conceived it, much less have adopted it as the great object of their lives. The supposition of selfish men giving up every private interest to spread a system which condemned themselves, and which tended only to purify mankind, is an absurdity as gross as can be found in the most irrational faith. Christianity, therefore, when tried by its Motives, approves itself to be of God.

III. I now proceed to another and very important ground of my belief in the divine origin of Christianity. Its truth was attested by miracles. Its first teachers proved themselves the ministers of God by supernatural works. They did what man cannot do, what bore the impress of a divine power, and what thus sealed the divinity of their mission. A religion so attested must be true. This topic is a great one, and I ask your patient attention to it.

I am aware that a strong prejudice exists in some minds against the kind of evidence which I have now adduced. Miracles seem to them to carry a confutation in themselves. The presumption against them seems next to infinite. In this respect, the present times differ from the past. There have been ages, when men believed any thing and every thing; and the more monstrous the story, the more eagerly was it received by the credulous multitude. In the progress of knowledge men have come to see, that most of the prod-

igies and supernatural events in which their forefathers believed, were fictions of fancy, or fear, or imposture. The light of knowledge has put to flight the ghosts and witches which struck terror into earlier times. We now know, that not a few of the appearances in the heavens, which appalled nations, and were interpreted as precursors of divine vengeance, were natural effects. We have learned, too, that a highly excited imagination can work some of the cures once ascribed to magic; and the lesson taught us by these natural solutions of apparent miracles, is, that accounts of supernatural events are to be sifted with great jealousy and received with peculiar care.

But the result of this new light thrown on nature and history is, that some are disposed to discredit all miracles indiscriminately. So many having proved groundless, a sweeping sentence of condemnation is passed on all. The human mind, by a natural reaction, has passed from extreme credulousness, to the excess of incredulity. Some persons are even hardy enough to deride the very idea of a miracle. They pronounce the order of nature something fixed and immutable, and all suspensions of it incredible. This prejudice, for such it is, seems to deserve particular attention; for, until it is removed, the evidences of Christian miracles will have little weight. Let us examine it patiently and impartially.

The skeptic tells me, that the order of nature is fixed. I ask him, By whom or by what is it fixed? By an iron fate? By an inflexible necessity? Does not nature bear the signatures of an intelligent Cause? Does not the very idea of its order imply an ordaining or disposing Mind? Does not the universe, the more

it is explored, bear increasing testimony to a Being superior to itself? Then the order of nature is fixed by a Will which can reverse it. Then a power equal to miracles exists. Then miracles are not incredible.

It may be replied, that God indeed *can* work miracles, but that he *will* not. He will not? And how does the skeptic know this? Has God so told him? This language does not become a being of our limited faculties; and the presumptuousness which thus makes laws for the Creator, and restricts his agency to particular modes, is as little the spirit of true philosophy as of religion.

The skeptic sees nothing in miracles, but ground of offence. To me, they seem to involve in their very nature a truth so great, so vital, that I am not only reconciled to them, but am disposed to receive joyfully any sufficient proofs of their having been performed. To the skeptic, no principle is so important as the uniformity of nature, the constancy of its laws. To me, there is a vastly higher truth, to which miracles bear witness, and to which I welcome their aid. What I wish chiefly to know is, that Mind is the supreme power in the universe; that matter is its instrument and slave; that there is a Will to which nature can offer no obstruction; that God is unshackled by the laws of the universe, and controls them at his pleasure. This absolute sovereignty of the Divine Mind over the universe, is the only foundation of hope for the triumph of the human mind over matter, over physical influences, over imperfection and death. Now it is plain, that the strong impressions which we receive through the senses from the material creation, joined to our experience of its regularity, and to our instinctive trust in its future uni-

formity, do obscure this supremacy of God, do tempt us to ascribe a kind of omnipotence to nature's laws, and to limit our hopes to the good which is promised by these. There is a strong tendency in men to attach the idea of necessity to an unchanging regularity of operation, and to imagine bounds to a being who keeps one undeviating path, or who repeats himself perpetually. Hence, I say that I rejoice in miracles. They show and assert the supremacy of Mind in the universe. They manifest a spiritual power, which is in no degree enthralled by the laws of matter. I rejoice in these witnesses to so great a truth. I rejoice in whatever proves, that this order of nature, which so often weighs on me as a chain, and which contains no promise of my perfection, is not supreme and immutable, and that the Creator is not restricted to the narrow modes of operation with which I am most familiar.

Perhaps the form in which the objection to miracles is most frequently expressed, is the following; "It is derogatory," says the skeptic, "to the perfect wisdom of God, to suppose him to break in upon the order of his own works. It is only the unskilful artist who is obliged to thrust his hand into the machine for the purpose of supplying its defects, and of giving it a new impulse by an immediate agency." To this objection I reply, that it proceeds on false ideas of God and of the creation. God is not an artist, but a Moral Parent and Governor; nor is the creation a machine. If it were, it might be urged with greater speciousness, that miracles cannot be needed or required. One of the most striking views of the creation, is the contrast or opposition of the elements of which it consists. It includes not only matter but mind, not only lifeless and

unconscious masses, but rational beings, free agents; and these are its noblest parts and ultimate objects. The material universe was framed not for itself, but for these. Its order was not appointed for its own sake, but to instruct and improve a higher rank of beings, the intelligent offspring of God; and whenever a departure from this order, that is, whenever miraculous agency can contribute to the growth and perfection of his intelligent creatures, it is demanded by his wisdom, goodness, and all his attributes. If the Supreme Being proposed only such ends as mechanism can produce, then he might have framed a machinery so perfect and sure as to need no suspension of its ordinary movements. But he has an incomparably nobler end. His great purpose is to educate, to rescue from evil, to carry forward for ever the free, rational mind or soul; and who that understands what a free mind is, and what a variety of teaching and discipline it requires, will presume to affirm, that no lights or aids, but such as come to it through an invariable order of nature, are necessary to unfold it?

Much of the difficulty in regard to miracles, as I apprehend, would be removed, if we were to consider more particularly, that the chief distinction of intelligent beings is Moral Freedom, the power of determining themselves to evil as well as good, and consequently the power of involving themselves in great misery. When God made man, he framed not a machine, but a free being, who was to rise or fall according to his use or abuse of his powers. This capacity, at once the most glorious and the most fearful which we can conceive, shows us how the human race may have come into a condition, to which the illumination

of nature was inadequate. In truth, the more we consider the freedom of intelligent beings, the more we shall question the possibility of establishing an unchangeable order which will meet fully all their wants; for such beings, having of necessity a wide range of action, may bring themselves into a vast variety of conditions, and of course may come to need a relief not contained in the resources of nature. The history of the human race illustrates these truths. At the introduction of Christianity, the human family were plunged into gross and debasing error, and the light of nature had not served for ages to guide them back to truth. Philosophy had done its best, and failed. A new element, a new power seems to have been wanting to the progress of the race. That in such an exigence miraculous aid should be imparted, accords with our best views of God. I repeat it; were men mechanical beings, an undeviating order of nature might meet all their wants. They are free beings, who bear a moral relation to God, and as such may need, and are worthy of, a more various and special care than is extended over the irrational creation.

When I examine nature, I see reasons for believing that it was not intended by God to be the only method of instructing and improving mankind. I see reasons, as I think, why its order or regular course should be occasionally suspended, and why revelation should be joined to it in the work of carrying forward the race. I can offer only a few considerations on this point, but they seem to me worthy of serious attention. — The first is, that a fixed, invariable order of nature does not give us some views of God which are of great interest and importance, or at least it does not give them with that

distinctness which we all desire. It reveals him as the Universal Sovereign who provides for the whole or for the general weal, but not, with sufficient clearness, as a tender father, interested in the Individual. I see, in this fixed order, his care of the race, but not his constant, boundless concern for myself. Nature speaks of a general Divinity, not of the friend and benefactor of each living soul. This is a necessary defect attending an inflexible, unvarying administration by general laws; and it seems to require that God, to carry forward the race, should reveal himself by some other manner than by general laws. No conviction is more important to human improvement than that of God's paternal interest in every human being; and how can he communicate this persuasion so effectually, as by suspending nature's order, to teach, through an inspired messenger, his paternal love?

My second remark is, that, whilst nature teaches many important lessons, it is not a direct, urgent teacher. Its truths are not prominent, and consequently men may neglect it, and place themselves beyond its influence. For example, nature holds out the doctrine of One God, but does not compel attention to it. God's name is not written in the sky in letters of light, which all nations must read, nor sounded abroad in a voice, deep and awful as thunders, so that all must hear. Nature is a gentle, I had almost said, a reserved teacher, demanding patient thought in the learner, and may therefore be unheeded. Men may easily shut their ears and harden their hearts against its testimony to God. Accordingly we learn, that, at Christ's coming, almost all nations had lost the knowledge of the true glory of the Creator, and given themselves up to gross superstitions.

To such a condition of the world, nature's indirect and unimposing mode of instruction is not fitted, and thus it furnishes a reason for a more immediate and impressive teaching. In such a season of moral darkness, was it not worthy of God to kindle another and more quickening beam? When the long repeated and almost monotonous language of creation was not heard, was it unworthy of God to speak with a new and more startling voice? What fitter method was there for rousing those whom nature's quiet regularity could not teach, than to interrupt its usual course?

I proceed to another reason for expecting revelation to be added to the light of nature. Nature, I have said, is not a direct or urgent teacher, and men may place themselves beyond its voice. I say, thirdly, that there is one great point, on which we are deeply concerned to know the truth, and which is yet taught so indistinctly by nature, that men, however disposed to learn, cannot by that light alone obtain full conviction. What, let me ask, is the question in which each man has the deepest interest? It is this, Are we to live again; or is this life all? Does the principle of thought perish with the body; or does it survive? And if it survive, where? how? in what condition? under what law? There is an inward voice which speaks of judgment to come. Will judgment indeed come? and if so, what award may we hope or fear? The Future state of man, this is the great question forced on us by our changing life, and by approaching death. I will not say, that on this topic nature throws no light. I think it does; and this light continually grows brighter to them whose eyes revelation has couched and made strong to see. But nature alone does not meet our wants. I

might prove this by referring you to the ages preceding Christ, when the anxious spirit of man constantly sought to penetrate the gloom beyond the grave, when imagination and philosophy alike plunged into the future, but found no resting-place. But every man must feel, that, left to nature as his only guide, he must wander in doubt as to the life to come. Where, but from God himself, can I learn my destination? I ask at the mouth of the tomb for intelligence of the departed, and the tomb gives me no reply. I examine the various regions of nature, but I can discover no process for restoring the mouldering body, and no sign or track of the spirit's ascent to another sphere. I see the need of a power above nature to restore or perpetuate life after death; and if God intended to give assurance of this life, I see not how he can do it but by supernatural teaching, by a miraculous revelation. Miracles are the appropriate, and would seem to be the only mode of placing beyond doubt man's future and immortal being; and no miracles can be conceived so peculiarly adapted to this end as the very ones which hold the highest place in Christianity, — I mean the resurrection of Lazarus, and, still more, the resurrection of Jesus. No man will deny, that, of all truths, a future state is most strengthening to virtue and consoling to humanity. Is it then unworthy of God to employ miracles for the awakening or the confirmation of this hope? May they not even be expected, if nature, as we have seen, sheds but a faint light on this most interesting of all verities?

I add one more consideration in support of the position, that nature was not intended to be God's only method of teaching mankind. In surveying the human mind, we discover a principle which singularly fits it to

be wrought upon and benefited by miraculous agency, and which might therefore lead us to expect such interposition. I refer to that principle of our nature, by which we become in a measure insensible or indifferent to what is familiar, but are roused to attention and deep interest by what is singular, strange, supernatural. This principle of wonder is an important part of our constitution; and that God should employ it in the work of our education, is what reason might anticipate. I see, then, a foundation for miracles in the human mind; and, when I consider that the mind is God's noblest work, I ought to look to this as the interpreter of his designs. We are plainly so constituted, that the order of nature, the more it is fixed, excites us the less. Our interest is blunted by its ceaseless uniformity. On the contrary, departures from this order powerfully stir the soul, break up its old and slumbering habits of thought, turn it with a new solicitude to the Almighty Interposer, and prepare it to receive with awe the communications of his will. Was it unworthy of God, who gave us this sensibility to the wonderful, to appeal to it for the recovery of his creatures to himself?

I here close my remarks on the great objection of skepticism, that miracles are inconsistent with the divine perfections; that the Supreme Being, having established an order of operation, cannot be expected to depart from it. To me, such reasoning, if reasoning it may be called, is of no weight. When I consider God's paternal and moral relation to mankind, and his interest in their progress; when I consider how accordant it is with his character that he should make himself known to them by methods most fitted to awaken the mind and heart to his goodness; when I consider the need we

have of illumination in regard to the future life, more distinct and full than the creation affords; when I consider the constitution and condition of man, his free agency, and the corruption into which he had fallen; when I consider how little benefit a being so depraved was likely to derive from an order of nature to which he had grown familiar, and how plainly the mind is fitted to be quickened by miraculous interposition;—I say, when I take all these things into view, I see, as I think, a foundation in nature for supernatural light and aid, and I discern in a miraculous revelation, such as Christianity, a provision suited at once to the frame and wants of the human soul, and to the perfections of its Author.

There are other objections to miracles, though less avowed, than that which I have now considered, yet perhaps not less influential, and probably operating on many minds so secretly as to be unperceived. At two of these I will just glance. Not a few, I am confident, have doubts of the Christian miracles, because they see none *now*. Were their skepticism to clothe itself in language, it would say, "Show us miracles, and we will believe them. We suspect them, because they are confined to the past." Now this objection is a childish one. It may be resolved into the principle, that nothing in the past is worthy of belief, which is not repeated in the present. Admit this, and where will incredulity stop? How many forms and institutions of society, recorded in ancient history, have passed away. Has history, then, no title to respect? If indeed the human race were standing still, if one age were merely a copy of preceding ones, if each had precisely the same wants, then the miracles required at one period would be reproduced in all. But who does not know that there is a

progress in human affairs? that formerly mankind were in a different stage from that through which they are now passing? that of course the education of the race must be varied? and that miracles, important once, may be superfluous now? Shall we bind the Creator to invariable modes of teaching and training a race whose capacities and wants are undergoing a perpetual change? Because in periods of thick darkness God introduced a new religion by supernatural works, shall we expect these works to be repeated, when the darkness is scattered and their end attained? Who does not see that miracles, from their very nature, must be rare, occasional, limited? Would not their power be impaired by frequency? and would it not wholly cease, were they so far multiplied as to seem a part of the order of nature?

The objection I am now considering, shows us the true character of skepticism. Skepticism is essentially a narrowness of mind, which makes the present moment the measure of the past and future. It is the creature of sense. In the midst of a boundless universe, it can conceive no mode of operation but what falls under its immediate observation. The visible, the present, is every thing to the unbeliever. Let him but enlarge his views; let him look round on the immensity of the universe; let him consider the infinity of resources which are comprehended in omnipotence; let him represent to himself the manifold stages through which the human race is appointed to pass; let him remember that the education of the ever-growing mind must require a great variety of discipline; and especially let him admit the sublime thought, of which the germ is found in nature, that man was created to be trained for, and to

ascend to, an incomparably higher order of existence than the present, — and he will see the childishness of making his narrow experience the standard of all that is past and is to come in human history.

It is strange, indeed, that men of science should fall into this error. The improved science of the present day teaches them, that this globe of ours, which seems so unchangeable, is not now what it was a few thousand years ago. They find proofs by digging into the earth, that this globe was inhabited before the existence of the human race, by classes of animals which have perished, and the ocean peopled by races now unknown, and that the human race are occupying a ruined and restored world. Men of science should learn to free themselves from the vulgar narrowness which sees nothing in the past but the present, and should learn the stupendous and infinite variety of the dispensations of God.

There is another objection to miracles, and the last to be now considered, which is drawn from the well-known fact, that pretended miracles crowd the pages of ancient history. No falsehoods, we are told, have been more common than accounts of prodigies, and therefore the miraculous character of Christianity is a presumption against its truth. I acknowledge that this argument has its weight; and I am ready to say, that, did I know nothing of Christianity, but that it was a religion full of miracles; did I know nothing of its doctrines, its purpose, its influences, and whole history, I should suspect it as much as the unbeliever. There is a strong presumption against miracles, considered nakedly, or separated from their design and from all circumstances which explain and support them. There

is a like presumption against events not miraculous, but of an extraordinary character. But this is only a reason for severe scrutiny and slow belief, not for resisting strong and multiplied proofs. I blame no man for doubting a report of miracles when first brought to his ears. Thousands of absurd prodigies have been created by ignorance and fanaticism, and thousands more been forged by imposture. I invite you, then, to try scrupulously the miracles of Christianity; and, if they bear the marks of the superstitious legends of false religions, do not spare them. I only ask for them a fair hearing and calm investigation.

It is plainly no sufficient argument for rejecting all miracles, that men have believed in many which are false. If you go back to the times when miraculous stories were swallowed most greedily, and read the books then written on history, geography, and natural science, you will find all of them crowded with error; but do they therefore contain nothing worthy your trust? Is there not a vein of truth running through the prevalent falsehood? And cannot a sagacious mind very often detach the real from the fictitious, explain the origin of many mistakes, distinguish the judicious and honest from the credulous or interested narrator, and by a comparison of testimonies detect the latent truth? Where will you stop, if you start with believing nothing on points where former ages have gone astray? You must pronounce all religion and all morality to be delusion, for on both topics men have grossly erred. Nothing is more unworthy of a philosopher, than to found a universal censure on a limited number of unfavorable facts. This is much like the reasoning of the misanthrope, who, because he sees much vice, infers that

there is no virtue, and, because he has sometimes been deceived, pronounces all men hypocrites.

I maintain that the multiplicity of false miracles, far from disproving, gives support to those on which Christianity rests; for, first, there is generally some foundation for falsehood, especially when it obtains general belief. The love of truth is an essential principle of human nature; men generally embrace error on account of some precious ingredient of truth mixed with it, and for the time inseparable from it. The universal belief of past ages in miraculous interpositions, is to me a presumption that miracles have entered into human history. Will the unbeliever say, that it only shows the insatiable thirst of the human mind for the supernatural? I reply, that, in this reasoning, he furnishes a weapon against himself; for a strong principle in the human mind, impelling men to seek for and to cling to miraculous agency, affords a presumption that the Author of our being, by whom this thirst for the supernatural was given, intended to furnish objects for it, and to assign it a place in the education of the race.

But I observe, in the next place, and it is an observation of great importance, that the exploded miracles of ancient times, if carefully examined, not only furnish a general presumption in favor of the existence of genuine ones, but yield strong proof of the truth of those in particular upon which Christianity rests. I say to the skeptic, You affirm nothing but truth in declaring history to abound in false miracles; I agree with you in exploding by far the greater part of the supernatural accounts of which ancient religions boast. But how do we know these to be false? We do not so judge without proofs. We discern in them the marks of de-

lusion. Now I ask you to examine these marks, and then to answer me honestly, whether you find them in the miracles of Christianity. Is there not a broad line between Christ's works and those which we both agree in rejecting? I maintain that there is, and that nothing but ignorance can confound the Christian miracles with the prodigies of heathenism. The contrast between them is so strong as to forbid us to refer them to a common origin. The miracles of superstition carry the brand of falsehood in their own nature, and are disproved by the circumstances under which they were imposed on the multitude. The objects, for which they are said to have been wrought, are such as do not require or justify a divine interposition. Many of them are absurd, childish, or extravagant, and betray a weak intellect or diseased imagination. Many can be explained by natural causes. Many are attested by persons who lived in different countries and ages, and enjoyed no opportunities of inquiring into their truth. We can see the origin of many in the self-interest of those who forged them, and can account for their reception by the condition of the world. In other words, these spurious miracles were the natural growth of the ignorance, passions, prejudices, and corruptions of the times, and tended to confirm them. Now it is not enough to say, that these various marks of falsehood cannot be found in the Christian miracles. We find in them characters directly the reverse. They were wrought for an end worthy of God; they were wrought in an age of improvement; they are marked by a majesty, beneficence, unostentatious simplicity, and wisdom, which separate them immeasurably from the dreams of a disordered fancy or the contrivances of imposture.

They can be explained by no interests, passions, or prejudices of men. They are parts of a religion, which was singularly at variance with established ideas and expectations, which breathes purity and benevolence, which transcended the improvements of the age, and which thus carries with it the presumption of a divine original. Whence this immense distance between the two classes of miracles? Will you trace both to one source, and that a polluted one? Will you ascribe to one spirit, works as different as light and darkness, as earth and heaven? I am not, then, shaken in my faith by the false miracles of other religions. I have no desire to keep them out of sight; I summon them as my witnesses. They show me how naturally imposture and superstition leave the stamp of themselves on their fictions. They show how man, when he aspires to counterfeit God's agency, betrays more signally his impotence and folly. When I place side by side the mighty works of Jesus and the prodigies of heathenism, I see that they can no more be compared with one another, than the machinery and mock thunders of the theatre can be likened to the awful and beneficent powers of the universe.

In the preceding remarks on miracles, I have aimed chiefly to meet those general objections by which many are prejudiced against supernatural interpositions universally, and are disinclined to weigh any proof in their support. Hoping that this weak skepticism has been shown to want foundation in nature and reason, I proceed now to state more particularly the principal grounds on which I believe that the miracles ascribed to Jesus and the first propagators of Christianity, were actually wrought in attestation of its truth.

The evidences of facts are of two kinds, presumptive

and direct, and both meet in support of Christian miracles. First, there are strong presumptions in its favor. To this class of proofs, belong the views already given of the accordance of revelation and miracles with the wants and principles of human nature, with the perfections of God, with his relations to his human family, and with his ordinary providence. These I need not repeat. I will only observe, that a strong presumption in support of the miracles arises from the importance of the religion to which they belong. If I were told of supernatural works performed to prove, that three are more than one, or that human life requires food for its support, I should know that they were false. The presumption against them would be invincible. The author of nature could never supersede its wise and stupendous order to teach what falls within the knowledge of every child. Extraordinary interpositions of God suppose that truths of extraordinary dignity and beneficence are to be imparted. Now, in Christianity, I find truths of transcendent importance, which throw into shade all the discoveries of science, and which give a new character, aim, and interest, to our existence. Here is a fit occasion for supernatural interposition. A presumption exists in favor of miracles, by which a religion so worthy of God is sustained.

But a presumption in favor of facts, is not enough. It indeed adds much force to the direct proofs; still these are needed, nor are they wanting to Christianity. The direct proofs of facts are chiefly of two kinds; they consist of testimony, oral or written, and of effects, traces, monuments, which the facts have left behind them. The Christian miracles are supported by both. — We have first the most unexceptionable Testimo-

ny, nothing less than that of contemporaries and eye-witnesses, of the companions of Jesus and the first propagators of his religion. We have the testimony of men who could not have been deceived as to the facts which they report; who bore their witness amidst perils and persecutions; who bore it on the very spot where their Master lived and died; who had nothing to gain, and every thing to lose, if their testimony were false; whose writings breathe the sincerest love of virtue and of mankind; and who at last sealed their attestations with their blood. More unexceptionable witnesses to facts cannot be produced or conceived.

Do you say, "These witnesses lived ages ago; could we hear these accounts from their own lips, we should be satisfied"? I answer, You have something better than their own lips, or than their own word taken alone. You have, as has been proved, their writings. Perhaps you hear with some surprise that a book may be a better witness than its author; but nothing is more true, and I will illustrate it by an imaginary case in our own times.

Suppose, then, that a man claiming to be an eye-witness should relate to me the events of the three memorable days of July, in which the last revolution of France was achieved; suppose next, that a book, a history of that revolution, published and received as true in France, should be sent to me from that country. Which is the best evidence of the facts? I say the last. A single witness may deceive; but that a writer should publish in France the history of a revolution, which never occurred there, or which differed essentially from the true one, is, in the highest degree, improbable; and that such a history should obtain currency, that it

should not be instantly branded as a lie, is utterly impossible. A history received by a people as true, not only gives us the testimony of the writer, but the testimony of the nation among whom it obtains credit. It is a concentration of thousands of voices, of many thousand witnesses. I say, then, that the writings of the first teachers of Christianity, received as they were by the multitude of Christians in their own times and in those which immediately followed, are the testimonies of that multitude as well as of the writers. Thousands, nearest to the events, join in bearing testimony to the Christian miracles.

But there is another class of evidence, sometimes more powerful than direct witnesses, and this belongs to Christianity. Facts are often placed beyond doubt by the effects which they leave behind them. This is the case with the miracles of Christ. Let me explain this branch of evidence. I am told, when absent and distant from your city, that on a certain day, a tide, such as had never been known, rose in your harbour, overflowed your wharves, and rushed into your streets; I doubt the fact; but hastening here, I see what were once streets, strewed with sea-weed, and shells, and the ruins of houses, and I cease to doubt. A witness may deceive, but such effects cannot lie. All great events leave effects, and these speak directly of the cause. What, I ask, are the proofs of the American revolution? Have we none but written or oral testimony? Our free constitution, the whole form of our society, the language and spirit of our laws, all these bear witness to our English origin, and to our successful conflict for independence. Now the miracles of Christianity have left effects, which equally attest their reality, and cannot be

explained without them. I go back to the age of Jesus Christ, and I am immediately struck with the commencement and rapid progress of the most remarkable revolution in the annals of the world. I see a new religion, of a character altogether its own, which bore no likeness to any past or existing faith, spreading in a few years through all civilized nations, and introducing a new era, a new state of society, a change of the human mind, which has broadly distinguished all following ages. Here is a plain fact, which the skeptic will not deny, however he may explain it. I see this religion issuing from an obscure, despised, hated people. Its founder had died on the cross, a mode of punishment as disgraceful as the pillory or gallows of the present day. Its teachers were poor men, without rank, office, or education, taken from the fishing-boat and other occupations which had never furnished teachers to mankind. I see these men beginning their work on the spot where their Master's blood had been shed, as of a common malefactor; and I hear them summoning first his murderers, and then all nations and all ranks, the sovereign on the throne, the priest in the temple, the great and the learned, as well as the poor and the ignorant, to renounce the faith and the worship which had been hallowed by the veneration of all ages, and to take the yoke of their crucified Lord. I see passion and prejudice, the sword of the magistrate, the curse of the priest, the scorn of the philosopher, and the fury of the populace, joined to crush this common enemy; and yet, without a human weapon and in opposition to all human power, I see the humble Apostles of Jesus winning their way, overpowering prejudice, breaking the ranks of their opposers, changing enemies into friends, breathing into multitudes a calm spirit of mar-

tyrdom, and carrying to the bounds of civilization, and even into half-civilized regions, a religion which has contributed to advance society more than all other causes combined. Here is the effect. Here is a monument more durable than pillars or triumphal arches. Now I ask for an explanation of these effects. If Jesus Christ and his Apostles were indeed sent and empowered by God, and wrought miracles in attestation of their mission, then the establishment of Christianity is explained. Suppose them, on the other hand, to have been insane enthusiasts, or selfish impostors, left to meet the whole strength of human opposition, with nothing but their own power or rather their own weakness, and you have no cause for the stupendous effect I have described. Such men could no more have changed the face of the world, than they could have turned back rivers to their sources, sunk mountains into valleys, or raised valleys to the skies. Christianity, then, has not only the evidence of unexceptionable witnesses, but that of effects; a proof which will grow stronger by comparing its progress with that of other religions, such as Mahometanism, which sprung from human passions, and were advanced by human power.

IV. Having given my views on the subject of Christian miracles, I now pass to the last topic of this discourse. Its extent and importance will lead me to enlarge upon it in a subsequent discourse; but a discussion of Christian evidences, in which it should find no place, would be essentially defective. I refer to the proof of Christianity derived from the Character of its Author.

The character of Jesus was Original. He formed a new era in the moral history of the human race. His

perfection was not that of his age, nor a copy of the greatness which had long engrossed the world's admiration. Jesus stood apart from other men. He borrowed from none and leaned on none. Surrounded by men of low thoughts, he rose to the conception of a higher form of human virtue than had yet been realized or imagined, and deliberately devoted himself to its promotion, as the supreme object of his life and death. Conscious of being dedicated to this great work, he spoke with a calm dignity, an unaffected elevation, which separated him from all other teachers. Unsupported, he never wavered; sufficient to himself, he refused alliance with wealth or power. Yet, with all this self-subsistence and uncompromising energy, his character was the mildest, the gentlest, the most attractive, ever manifested among men. It could not have been a fiction, for who could have conceived it, or who could have embodied the conception in such a life as Jesus is said to have led, in actions, words, manners, so natural and unstudied, so imbued with reality, so worthy of the Son of God?

The great distinction of Jesus was a philanthropy without mixture and without bounds; a philanthropy, uniting grandeur and meekness in beautiful proportions; a philanthropy, as wise as it was fervent, which comprehended the true wants and the true good of man, which compassionated, indeed, his sufferings from abroad, but which saw in the soul the deep fountain of his miseries, and labored, by regenerating this, to bring him to a pure and enduring happiness. So peculiar, so unparalleled was the benevolence of Jesus, that it has impressed itself on all future times. There went forth a virtue, a beneficent influence from his character, which operates even now. Since the death of Christ, a spirit of hu-

manity, unknown before, has silently diffused itself over a considerable portion of the earth. A new standard of virtue has gradually possessed itself of the veneration of men. A new power has been acting on society, which has done more than all other causes combined, to disarm the selfish passions, and to bind men strongly to one another and to God. What a monument have we here to the virtue of Jesus! and if Christianity has such a Founder, it must have come from Heaven.

There are other remarkable proofs of the power and elevation of the character of Christ. It has touched and conciliated not a few of the determined adversaries of his religion. Infidelity, whilst it has laid unsparing hands on the system, has generally shrunk from offering violence to its Author. In truth, unbelievers have occasionally borne eloquent testimony to the benignant and celestial virtues of Jesus; and I record this with pleasure, not only as honorable to Christianity, but as showing that unbelief does not universally sear the moral feelings, or breathe hostility to goodness. Nor is this all. The character of Christ has withstood the most deadly and irresistible foe of error and unfounded claims, I mean, Time. It has lost nothing of its elevation by the improvements of ages. Since he appeared, society has gone forward, men's views have become enlarged, and philosophy has risen to conceptions of far purer virtues than were the boast of antiquity. But, however the human mind may have advanced, it must still look upward, if it would see and understand Christ. He is still above it. Nothing purer, nobler, has yet dawned on human thoughts. Then Christianity is true. The delineation of Jesus in the Gospels, so warm with life, and so unrivalled in loveliness and grandeur, required the

quisitions of an original. To suppose that this character was invented by unprincipled men, amidst Jewish and heathen darkness, and was then imposed as a reality in the very age of the founder of Christianity, argues an excess of credulity, and a strange ignorance of the powers and principles of human nature. The character of Jesus was real; and if so, Jesus must have been what he professed to be, the Son of God and the revealer of his mercy and his will to mankind.

I have now completed what I proposed in this discourse. I have laid before you some of the principal evidences of Christianity. I have aimed to state them without exaggeration. That an honest mind, which thoroughly comprehends them, can deny their force, seems to me hardly possible. Stronger proofs may indeed be conceived; but it is doubtful, whether these could be given in consistency with our moral nature, and with the moral government of God. Such a government requires, that truth should not be forced on the mind, but that we should be left to gain it, by an upright use of our understandings, and by conforming ourselves to what we have already learned. God might indeed shed on us an overpowering light, so that it would be impossible for us to lose our way; but in so doing, he would annihilate an important part of our present probation. It is then no objection to Christianity, that its evidences are not the very strongest which might be given, and that they do not extort universal assent. In this respect, it accords with other great truths. These are not forced on our belief. Whoever will, may shut his eyes on their proofs, and array against them objections. In the measure of evidence with which Christi-

anity is accompanied, I see a just respect for the freedom of the mind, and a wise adaptation to that moral nature, which it is the great aim of this religion to carry forward to perfection.

I close as I began. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is True. It is true: and its truth is to break forth more and more gloriously. Of this I have not a doubt. I know indeed that our religion has been questioned even by intelligent and good men; but this does not shake my faith in its divine original or in its ultimate triumphs. Such men have questioned it, because they have known it chiefly by its corruptions. In proportion as its original simplicity shall be restored, the doubts of the well-disposed will yield. I have no fears from infidelity; especially from that form of it, which some are at this moment laboring to spread through our country; I mean, that insane, desperate unbelief, which strives to quench the light of nature as well as of revelation, and to leave us, not only without Christ, but without God. This I dread no more than I should fear the efforts of men to pluck the sun from his sphere, or to storm the skies with the artillery of the earth. We were made for religion; and unless the enemies of our faith can change our nature, they will leave the foundation of religion unshaken. The human soul was created to look above material nature. It wants a Deity for its love and trust, an Immortality for its hope. It wants consolations not found in philosophy, wants strength in temptation, sorrow, and death, which human wisdom cannot minister; and knowing as I do, that Christianity meets these deep wants of men, I have no fear or doubt as to its triumphs. Men cannot long live without

religion. In France there is a spreading dissatisfaction with the skeptical spirit of the past generation. A philosopher in that country would now blush to quote Voltaire as an authority in religion. Already Atheism is dumb where once it seemed to bear sway. The greatest minds in France are working back their way to the light of truth. Many of them indeed cannot yet be called Christians; but their path, like that of the wise men of old who came star-guided from the East, is towards Christ. I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It has an immortal life, and will gather strength from the violence of its foes. It is equal to all the wants of men. The greatest minds have found in it the light which they most anxiously desired. The most sorrowful and broken spirits have found in it a healing balm for their woes. It has inspired the sublimest visions and the loftiest hopes. For the corruptions of such a religion I weep, and I should blush to be their advocate; but of the Gospel itself, I can never be ashamed.

END OF VOL. III.

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